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THE LIFE

OF

MARIE ANTOINE

VOLUME I.

[redacted]



Marie Antoinette

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PREFACE.

HAVING been commissioned by the "Revue des Questions Historiques," some years ago, to write a review of "The Correspondence of the Comte de Mercy with Maria Theresa," which had then just appeared, I made the following statement: —

"The exact historical truth is to be found in these reports of Mercy, and is a mean between the mass of partisan assertions of Madame Campan, Weber, and Montjoye on the one hand, and the calumnies and coarse insinuations of Besenval, Lauzun, and Soulavie, on the other, — between the systematic aspersion of her enemies and the almost superstitious enthusiasm of her friends; somewhere between the libel and the legend, but on the whole nearer the legend. Marie Antoinette was not a sinner, neither was she a saint. She was a pure and charming woman, somewhat heedless and frivolous, but always chaste; a queen somewhat too hot-headed in the patronage she bestowed, and inconsiderate in her political actions, but proud and energetic; a true queen, by reason of the dignity of her bearing and the splendour of her majesty; a true woman, in virtue of the seductiveness of her manners

and the tenderness of her heart, till she became a martyr, through the extremity of her trials and her triumphant death." [1]

Fifteen years of conscientious research, the examination of new and important documents,—such as the "Papers of Count Fersen," "The Correspondence of Baron de Staël," that of Count von Goltz, that of Mercy with Joseph II. and Kaunitz, "The Memoirs of the Duchesse de Tourzel," etc.,—have not changed my opinion; and I repeat now what I wrote in 1874.

The same qualities that mark the first ten years of Marie Antoinette's life in France are to be found during the last thirteen, and till the fatal 16*th. of October*, 1793, *with only such changes as age, experience, maternity, and, above all, misfortune, were bound to bring.*

I have sought to present them as they appeared to me after much study and comparison of texts, bearing in mind as far as possible not only the first, but the secondary causes that produced them.

I have not suppressed either mistakes or faults, having no other desire but to discover the truth, and no other ambition but to speak it.

Have I succeeded? It is for my readers to decide.

[1] *Revue des Questions Historiques, April,* 1874, *p.* 594.

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VOLUME I.

INTRODUCTION.

"IF ever a nation were justified in being astonished by an event, it was by the alliance between the king and the empress-queen, concluded in 1756."

It was in these words that the Duc de Choiseul, minister of foreign affairs, summed up this important event in his instructions to the Comte de Choiseul in 1759, who had been appointed ambassador to Vienna, after having been one of the chief promoters of the change brought about in the policy of France during the eighteenth century; and so profound was his conviction that he repeated the same opinion again twice in the same terms, — once in 1761 to the Comte du Châtelet, and in 1766 to the Marquis de Durfort.

The change was, indeed, a radical one; and public astonishment must have been great. For more than two centuries France had been accustomed to regard Austria as her perpetual enemy. Freed from anxiety on the score of England, — who had been her hereditary foe during the whole of the Middle Ages, but who had been definitely driven across the Channel by the glorious career of Jeanne d'Arc, and later by the capture of Calais by François de Guise, — she had been obliged from the beginning of modern times to fight not only for her power, but for her very existence, against the double menace of the Hapsburgs, who in their two branches, the Spanish and Austrian, threatened her on the north, south, and east. To break this belt, which was strangling us; to push back to the natural frontiers the advance posts which the king of Spain on the one side, and the emperor on the other, had gained on our territory; to reconquer our liberty of movement,

and to assure to the crown of France "the superior rôle which belonged to it by right of its antiquity, dignity, and grandeur," — such was the object pursued with patient obstinacy and patriotic cunning by all the princes since Francis I. and the great ministers who had served them. For a time eclipsed rather than given up during the religious disputes under the last of the Valois, the struggle broke out again with renewed energy under the Bourbons. This struggle for existence was the cause of various alliances which must have been repugnant to his Most Christian Majesty, but which necessity imposed upon him, — the alliances with the Sultan, and with the Protestants of Germany and Holland, who, being hostile to Spain and Austria, were naturally useful allies for us. And it was thus under the protection of France that the grandeur of the Hohenzollern, who from electors of Brandenburg became kings of Prussia, was founded and developed.

But the situation was changed. The conquests of Richelieu and Mazarin, assured by the treaties of Westphalia and of the Pyrenees, the victories of Louis XIV., and even his defeats, which resulted in the peace of Utrecht, had transformed the map of Europe. The House of Austria was forever expelled from Spain, where it had been replaced by the Bourbons; and if it continued to be a danger to us because of its possessions in Italy, and, above all, because of its domain in the Low Countries, where the coalition had obviously placed it as an advance-guard against us, and because of its alliance with England (who, though kindly disposed toward Louis XIV. under the Stuarts, had, with the accession of George III. and the House of Hanover, resumed all her old anti-French traditions), the treaties of Vienna and of Aix-la-Chapelle, evicting it from Naples and Parma, and the treaty of Belgrade, reducing it on the east, had essentially weakened its prestige, while increasing that of Prussia.

Was it wise to push our revenge further, to pursue to extinction our old adversary, already sufficiently humiliated, in order to raise on the ruins a young, restless, and warlike power, whose leader, governed by his ambitions and held in check only by his interests, had from the start shown himself a fractious and disloyal ally? Was it necessary, out of pretended respect for tradi-

tional policy, but in reality from mere routine, to persist in a system whose good effects had already been enjoyed; or would it not be better, by ending a struggle which for the future would be without object, to guarantee the results already acquired, and assure the equilibrium obtained?

For some time observant persons might have noted a decrease in the feud between the Houses of France and Austria. The Emperor Charles VI., cured of his ideas of conquest, and enlightened by his last defeats, had been contemplating a reconciliation with France; and Cardinal Fleury was by no means disposed to reject his overtures. "He thought," as some one has justly remarked, "that France and Austria having both reached their full development, it would be wiser to seek to assure their power than to extend it; and that by uniting they could exercise a pacific influence over the rest of Europe." The indorsement by Versailles of the Pragmatic Sanction, which assured the succession of the Hapsburgs, seemed the consecration of this policy of peace; and even the treaty of Belgrade, wherein French influence, exerted for the benefit of Turkey, checkmated the projects of the emperor, did not alter the aspect of affairs. An active correspondence was established between Charles VI. and Fleury; and if we may believe the testimony of an unprejudiced witness, Frederick II., these intimate relations were on the point of resulting in the peaceful surrender of the grand duchy of Luxembourg to the king. It is asserted that before dying the emperor recommended his daughter to ally herself with France.

As for Louis XVI., his naturally keen intelligence often comprehended the part it would be wise for him to play, though his lack of energy often made him fail to undertake it; and in this instance he shared the views of his minister, and leaned visibly toward an understanding with the court of Vienna. We read in the instructions given to the Comte d'Estrées "that the king had for a long time chafed at the prejudices against the establishment of a policy which would satisfy his heart, and which seemed to him more fitting than another for the maintenance of the only true religion and the general peace, and for the curbing of the ambition of each prince within the limit and power of his particular estate."

The unfortunate war of the Austrian succession, in which the Cabinet of Versailles, urged by Frederick II., incited by the military faction and its chief, the Maréchal de Belle-Isle, and encouraged by public opinion, which was still imbued with the old prejudices, broke its promises. This war, which seemed to add but another to Austria's grievances against France, did not, however, put an end to her desire for a reconciliation. It seemed, on the contrary, to increase it by all the passion of revenge which Maria Theresa felt for the king of Prussia. The loss of Silesia, brutally seized without any declaration of hostilities, seemed much more bitter to her than the surrender of Parma and Plaisance. Even during the war itself she had on various occasions, and either directly or through the intervention of the court of Dresden, made overtures of peace to France in particular, even offering to cede certain places in the Low Countries, provided that the king would only remain neutral between her and the king of Prussia. After the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, the overtures were continued, and, we are bound to say, were reciprocated.

While the Count von Kaunitz, who was ambassador to Paris from 1751 to 1753, before he became the director of the Austrian policy, — which position he held for more than forty years, — was exerting himself to establish cordial relations with the cabinet of Versailles, and succeeded to a certain degree, the instructions given to the French ministers sent to Vienna bore the impress of a like good-will. The minister of state for foreign affairs, Monsieur de Puysieux, wrote in 1750: —

"The Marquis d'Hautefort will be careful in his conversations with the imperial ministers, when the fitting occasion arises, to say that the king is by no means affected by the ancient prejudices which since the time of Charles V. have made the House of France regard the House of Austria as her dangerous and implacable rival; that the hostility between these two great powers should no longer be a reason of state; and that his Majesty, on the contrary, is convinced that they would find their safety and mutual convenience in a sincere alliance and a perfect understanding which might be cemented between the two kingdoms; that this understanding, once established, would prevent future wars, which, by exhausting the treasuries of the sovereigns, are always so unfortunate for the nations



who are their victims; that the engagements which the king would enter into with the court of Vienna, having no other end or motive but the public peace, would in no wise be incompatible with those which the two courts had already entered upon with other powers."

The same language was used three years later to the Marquis d'Aubeterre, who succeeded the Marquis d'Hautefort: —

"There is no question to-day of the famous quarrels of Francis I. and Charles V. Circumstances have changed; the king's only desire is to live in harmony with the empress-queen. No trace of those antiquated grievances remains in his Majesty's heart. He is wholly disposed to contribute to the advantages of their Imperial Majesties."

In any case, this idea of a reconciliation with Austria, as the instructions to Monsieur d'Hautefort prove, did not go as far as the breaking of other alliances. The king of France remained what he had been since the treaty of Westphalia, — the protector of the German Confederation; though the friend of Austria, he had no intention of sacrificing Prussia to her. Prussia was a power which had sprung up under his patronage; he would not abandon it. But finding that the young power was well grown, that it was becoming restless, factious, discontented, and inclined to brave its tutor, and, if need were, supplant him, he thought it time to check a development which, under the young successor of Frederick William, might become threatening. It was futile for France to regard Germany as a devoted ally, and it was foolish to raise up there a new rival. "If it were not to the honour or glory of France to deliver over the king of Prussia to the wrath of the court of Vienna, neither could she allow the elector of Brandenburg to usurp the position occupied in Europe by the king of France."

Things were at this pass, the two governments being obviously ahead of public opinion in their respective countries, and therefore limited to mere coquetry and civility, when, in the beginning of September, 1755, the Count von Stahremberg, Austrian ambassador in Paris, asked for an interview with Madame de Pompadour, in order to acquaint her with certain secret propositions with which the empress had charged him. It is said that Maria

Theresa, being desirous above all things that these negotiations should prove successful, and knowing the preponderating influence of the favourite, had not hesitated to write her a letter wherein she had carried her condescension to the point of addressing her as "dear friend." This is but tradition; and Maria Theresa herself took pains to deny it in a letter to the wife of the elector of Saxony. But what the empress had not done, the ambassador did not hesitate to do; and it was through the intervention of Madame de Pompadour that he presented the propositions. He had asked that the king appoint one of his ministers to be present at this first conference, who should afterward serve as intermediary. The king named the Abbé de Bernis; and although the favourite declared that this choice was spontaneous, it is difficult to believe that she did not at least suggest the name of this man, who was not a member of the Council, but who, she knew, was wholly devoted to her. This appointment also served to conceal from the ministers, whose prejudices against Austria were well known, a proposition which appealed to the secret desire of the king.

After some objections Bernis accepted the mission confided to him; and his interviews with the Austrian ambassador began on the following day. They took place in a little house situated below the Terrace of Bellevue, the name of which, Babiole, served as a subject of pleasantry to the friends of Frederick II. Madame de Pompadour was present at the first; the others took place between Bernis and Stahremberg alone. There was not even a secretary to do the writing. "The intention of the empress was to negotiate, as it were, *tête-à-tête* with the king." Maria Theresa, Joseph II., and Kaunitz, at Vienna, and at Versailles the king and Madame de Pompadour, were alone in the secret. It was not until after nearly three months that the French ministers, or at least some of them, were initiated. As to the foreign ministers, "the secret was so well guarded," writes Bernis, "that during more than six months they did not even suspect the understanding existing between us." Every evening Bernis submitted to the king the results of the day, and had him approve all the answers and memoirs which he transmitted to Stahremberg.

Despite his sovereign's passionate desire to reach a conclusion,

the French negotiator proceeded with the greatest precaution; he was always afraid of a snare. The very frankness and abandon with which the imperial government set forth its projects and disclosed its views put him on guard against their sincerity. The propositions of Maria Theresa offered real advantages for France, the House of Bourbon, and the peace of Europe; but they necessitated such a radical change of policy that Bernis hesitated to agree to them. The king would have accepted them more quickly; but he respected the motives of his plenipotentiary, and left him free to act. The response to the first overtures of Stahremberg was reserved, almost cold; they intrenched themselves behind the stipulations of Aix-la-Chapelle, and the negotiations were dragging along, when an unexpected discovery came to change the face of things, and hasten the conclusion.

On the first day, — and it was one of the chief facts on which he based his argument, — the ambassador had averred that since the month of August the king of Prussia had been negotiating a treaty with England by means of the intervention of the Duke of Brunswick. But how could one believe in this defection? Our diplomats knew nothing of it. Was not this a trap which was baited by the excitement of our legitimate anger? The king of Prussia had been bound to us for fourteen years by a treaty which had still some months to run. How could one suppose that at the moment of renewing it (for nothing had shown any inclination on his part to break it) he would ally himself with England, at that time the faithful friend of Austria, and our traditional enemy, — particularly at a moment when a fresh conflict had just broken out between the two ancient rivals? On the 8th of June, 1755, in fact, in the midst of peace and without any declaration of hostility, the English fleet had seized two French ships, the "Alcide" and the "Lys." The insult had been keenly resented in France, and the Prussian minister in Paris, the Baron von Knyphausen, outdoing the French in his indignation, went about repeating that such an aggression was intolerable, and that it should be punished without delay, by attacking both England and her ally, Austria, even offering the assistance of his master, who was ready to enter Bohemia with forty thousand men. The

Cabinet, not being ready, resisted these instigations, and contented itself with sending a remonstrance to the Cabinet of London, abstained from all reprisals, but none the less continued its preparations for war, which every day seemed more inevitable. How could one believe that Frederick would choose precisely this moment to abandon his faithful ally, who had just been brutally insulted, and draw near to the aggressor against whom he was manifesting his disapproval so noisily?

However strange and improbable Stahremberg's revelation seemed, it was necessary to investigate it. An ambassador extraordinary, the Duc de Nivernais, was sent to Berlin under pretext of examining with the king of Prussia the manner of renewing the treaty of 1741, in reality to discover his true sentiments, and in a way to feel his pulse in this serious juncture. *Grand seigneur* in every sense of the term, but liberal, a man of the world and of the best society, with an open and enlightened mind, a poet at times, and a member of the French Academy, a partisan of Prussia, like most of the courtiers of that period, — the Duc de Nivernais could not but be *persona grata* at Berlin. The king received him well, welcomed him both as plenipotentiary and as academician, heard his views, listened to his propositions, overwhelmed him with civilities, protested his attachment to France, strengthened his confidence, hoodwinked his perspicacity, and one fine day announced to him cynically that his minister to London had just signed a treaty of alliance with England. Despite the efforts which the duke made to persuade him not to ratify an act which at that moment was a veritable betrayal of us, he confirmed it in a way, under his eyes, on Feb. 16, 1756, offering as compensation to sign one with us, which, as Bernis remarked, seemed like derision; and to all the remonstrances of the plenipotentiary he only replied by pleasantry. "You are very angry," he said, laughing; "why don't you make a treaty with the empress? I should not mind."

During this time the conferences of Bellevue, embarrassed by the first reply of Bernis, progressed but slowly. There was no question, moreover, of anything between France and Austria but a simple guarantee treaty, in which the French negotiator insisted upon having the Prussian king included. The news of Frederick's

treachery precipitated matters. "France could not remain without alliances; and, abandoned by Prussia, she was obliged to ally herself with the court of Vienna, or remain exposed to the league of the great powers of Europe." The negotiations, for a time interrupted by the illness of Bernis, resulted at last, on May 1, 1756, in an alliance defensive and neutral.

This step gave rise to much controversy and severe criticism, both on its conclusion and later. The authors of memoirs, who were devoted to the king of Prussia, the philosophers who were subsidized by him, the diplomats of the old school, whose ideas were thereby deranged, were not long in attacking this profound change in the policy of France. Frederick himself, in his "Writings," posed as a victim. History, better understood, has shown the true value of the recriminations of this strange champion of liberty and the rights of man. It has been clearly proved that it was he who first betrayed the alliance with France, and that the treaty of Versailles was but the perfectly legitimate response to the treaty of London. As for the consequences of this act, if they have not always been such as were prophesied and hoped for; if they have sometimes turned to the detriment of France and to the advantage of Austria; if they resulted in the disasters of the Seven Years' War, and the partition of Poland, — it was not the fault of the negotiators of the treaty of 1756, but of those who continued their work, and who did not know how to reap the natural and just fruit of it. As Bernis himself has rightly observed, "The failure was due to our bad conduct, to the poor use we made of our forces, and to the intrigues which governed the choice of our leaders."

But at the time when this treaty was concluded, it solved in the most satisfactory way a difficult and delicate situation. When a new war broke out with England, it deprived her of her most powerful auxiliary. It sustained the treaty of Westphalia, — the foundation of our influence in Germany. It did not drag us into the differences between Austria and Prussia, since, out of consideration for his former protégé, Louis XV. had expressly stipulated that no steps should be taken against the king of Prussia unless he violated the conditions of Aix-la-Chapelle. In thus destroying, or at least greatly diminishing, the chances of

a continental war, in securing our frontier to the north, and in uniting the two great powers, it gave us an opportunity to reconstruct our naval forces, and to give ourselves up entirely to the maritime struggle with our ancient rival. It even enabled us to establish peace more promptly and on a better foundation. "And thus," Bernis writes, "the king ought to have played the most important political and military rôle in Europe without infringing upon right or justice." In the place of the doubtful friendship of the king of Prussia, — a factious and distrustful ally, strong indeed in the resources of his genius, but always ready to change sides in the interest of his ambition, — we substituted an alliance with a power of the first order, which, having resigned its pretensions to universal dominion, and retired within its proper limits, was no longer a danger, but a support. It was an act of wisdom, and, under the circumstances, an act of necessity. To speak truly, it was less the abandonment of the policy of Richelieu and of Louis XIV. than its fulfilment and consecration. "The greatest homage which Louis XV. could pay his predecessors," an eminent statesman has written, "was to recognize, as history should do to-day, that since they had pushed the claims of France against Austria to the uttermost, it was neither necessary nor prudent to push them further."

And as if to cement this new policy, while the negotiations were pending in France which resulted in the treaty of Versailles, the empress in Austria gave birth to the child who was one day to become the dearest bond of union and the living symbol of the alliance between the two countries.

LIFE OF MARIE ANTOINETTE.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH OF MARIE ANTOINETTE. — THE DUKE VON TAROUKA. — THE POET METASTASIO. — EDUCATION. — THE COUNTESS VON BRANDEISS. — THE COUNTESS VON LERCHENFELD. — DEATH OF FRANCIS I.; HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS CHILDREN. — THE ABBÉ DE VERMOND. — CELEBRATION OF THE BETROTHAL. — DEPARTURE OF MARIE ANTOINETTE. — THE EMPRESS'S COUNSEL TO HER DAUGHTER.

MARIE ANTOINETTE JEANNE DE LORRAINE of Austria was born in Vienna on November 2, All Saints' Day, 1755.

On the same day, as if misfortune wished from the first to put an indelible stamp upon the life which seemed to promise so brilliantly and yet was destined to know so many reverses, a frightful earthquake visited central Europe, destroying Lisbon, chasing the future godfather and godmother of the child from their crumbling palace, burying beneath the ruins thirty thousand men, and engulfing on the strand at Cadiz the heir to one of the most glorious names in French literature, — the grandson of the great Racine.

The young archduchess was the sixth daughter and ninth child of Francis of Lorraine, Emperor of Germany, and of the illustrious Maria Theresa. A story is told that one evening in the early autumn of 1755, when the empress was receiving at Schoenbrunn, she laughingly asked the Duke von Tarouka, "Shall I have a boy or a girl?" "A prince, without doubt, Madame," replied the courtier. "Well," Maria Theresa answered, "I wager two ducats that I shall give birth to a girl." Some time after, the child was born. The Duke von Tarouka lost; he sent the amount of the bet to the empress enclosed in this ingenious quatrain of the poet Metastasio: —

"Ho perduto: l'augusta figlia
A pagar m' ha, condamnato.
Ma s'e vero ch'a voi simiglia
Tutto l' mundo ha guadagnato."

("I have lost: the august girl has condemned me to pay. But if it be true that she resembles you, then all the world has gained.")

On November 3, the young princess was baptized by the archbishop of Vienna. Her godfather and godmother were the king and queen of Portugal, represented by the Archduke Joseph and the Archduchess Marie Anne. A solemn *Te Deum* was then sung; during two days the court was in full dress, and during one in semi-full dress; but the emperor — was it owing to some vague presentiment of the future? — could not bring himself to give a great public banquet. Instead of this, there were two days of rejoicing, the 5th and 6th of November, with public shows and free passage through the gates of the city. The empress, who was seriously indisposed after her confinement, did not celebrate her recovery in the court chapel until the 14th of December.

From the hands of her nurse, Marie Constance Hoffman, wife of a councillor of the magistracy, Jean Georges Weber, the young archduchess presently passed into those of her governess, the Countess von Brandeiss. Life at Vienna was simple. "The imperial family," said Goethe, "is nothing more than a large German *bourgeoisie*." Etiquette was unknown. The emperor and empress liked to live in the midst of their subjects, kind and friendly toward all, but restraining familiarity by respect. Unfortunately they were so absorbed by the care of the policy and administration of their vast empire that they had little leisure to superintend the education of their numerous children. They confided them to tutors and governesses whom they chose with care, and to whom it appears they gave their instructions, without, however, seeing that they were carried out.

With her ardent and pleasure-loving disposition, her affectionate and sensitive heart, her mind, which was quick and subtle but difficult to hold, her obstinacy in having her own way, and her cleverness in eluding remonstrances, her taste for satire, in which she was encouraged by her sister Caroline, with whom she was educated till 1767, her fondness for amusements rather than serious studies, — Marie Antoinette did not find in her governess

that grave and unwavering firmness which should have checked her frivolity and conquered her wilfulness. The Countess von Brandeiss loved her pupil very dearly, and her affection was warmly reciprocated by the charge whom she spoiled. If, perchance, she tried to be severe, and reprimand her, a childish outbreak, a witticism, or a caress would easily overcome her momentary displeasure. Until her pupil attained the age of twelve, she was too little solicitous to inculcate that concentration of mind, regularity of work, and self-control without which even the most brilliant talents remain sterile; thus education failed to fecundate a mind which Nature had so richly dowered.

The Countess von Lerchenfeld, who succeeded the Countess von Brandeiss in 1768, had greater strength of mind and more firmness of character; but being possessed of an unequal temper and delicate health, she could obviously have but little sympathy with the lively and ardent child under her care. Marie Antoinette grew up to be independent and gay, witty and charming, fascinating all who came near her by I know not what mixture of French petulance and German simplicity, but possessed rather of natural talents than acquired accomplishments. Messmer, the director of the Viennese schools, taught her to write; Metastasio taught her Italian; Aufresne and Sainville, French pronunciation and declamation; Noverre, dancing; still others, music and drawing; but Maria Theresa complained that she did not profit sufficiently from these lessons.

Although the young princess manifested great taste for music, a taste which continued during her whole life, and studied Latin without repugnance and Italian with pleasure; though she took an interest in history, provided that it was presented to her as an amusement and not as work, — she did not make equal progress in her other studies. Her handwriting was poor, and was not perfected until after she went to France. Her drawings frequently had to be retouched; and she took certain liberties with orthography, which, however, it is but fair to say, was a failing she shared in common with a great number of the distinguished women of her time.

On the other hand, her judgment was good, her good-nature delightful, her sensibility always ready to do a kindness. One day when the empress was ill, some Hungarian officers were waiting in the antechamber for an opportunity to present a petition to her. Marie Antoinette saw them on her way to her mother's room.



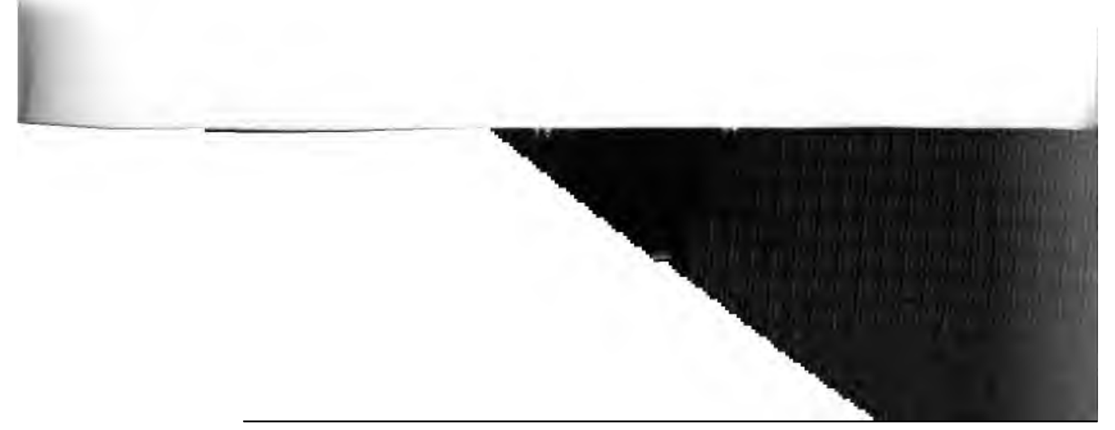
"Mamma," she said, "some of your friends are anxious about your health, and wish to see you." "Eh, who are these friends?" "Some Hungarians." The chivalrous devotion of the Hungarians for their *king*, Maria Theresa, was well known. The empress understood what the archduchess had thus delicately insinuated, and the demand of the petitioners was granted.

Another time, the winter having been excessively severe in Vienna, and all work consequently suspended, the suffering among the working classes was very great. As they were discussing it one evening at the palace in the family drawing-room, Marie Antoinette approached her mother, and gave her a small box. "There are fifty-five ducats," she said; "'t is all I have. Will you allow them to be distributed among the unfortunate sufferers?"

Maria Theresa took them, and adding a larger sum to her daughter's savings, allowed the charitably minded girl to distribute the whole herself.

With this charming disposition of heart and mind, a bewitching spontaneity, which gave evidence of her delicate sensibility, with a childish expansiveness, which in no wise understood the formalities of etiquette, and a naïve sincerity, which the poisonous air of courts had not stifled, — Marie Antoinette, or rather Madame Antoine, as she was called at the palace of Schoenbrunn, exercised over all who saw her an almost irresistible fascination. When, in 1766, Madame Geoffrin passed through Austria on her way to visit the king of Poland at Varsovie, — him whom she called her "Dear Son," — she stopped at Vienna, and was there very graciously received. Maria Theresa was desirous of presenting to her her daughters, particularly her youngest. Madame Geoffrin was captivated. "There is a child whom I should like to carry off with me!" she cried. "Take her; take her!" the empress replied gayly; and she recommended her visitor to write to France that she had seen the little one, and had found her beautiful. Madame Geoffrin was careful to do so: she described her sojourn in Vienna to her friend, Bautin the financier; and the salons of Paris began to talk of the beauty and grace of her who was soon to become the dauphiness of France.

Sometimes, however, in the midst of her demonstrations of affection and her dreams of a glorious future for her daughter, the empress felt herself overcome by a gloomy presentiment; she would then draw the girl to her, and press her to her heart,



and say to her in a voice full of emotion, "My daughter, in the time of misfortune think of me."

During her long life, so checkered and so glorious, Maria Theresa had many a time experienced the rude blows of grief; and the gay and light-hearted child, whose fair hair she kissed, was also to know to an uncommon degree the sorrows that may rend the heart of a queen. She had experienced a glimpse of them while still quite young: Marie Antoinette was but ten years old when her father set out for Innspruck, to be present at the marriage of his second son Leopold, grand-duke of Tuscany. Before his departure he called for his daughter, "took her on his knee and kissed her again and again with tears in his eyes, seeming very loath to leave her;" "I longed to kiss that child," he remarked. A few days after, on the 18th of August, 1765, Francis of Lorraine had a stroke of apoplexy, while sitting at table during the wedding feast.

In dying he left to his children, under the title, "Instructions to my Children both for their Spiritual and Temporal Lives," some admirable counsel, bearing the stamp of lofty wisdom and true Christian spirit; but in which, faithful perhaps to the patriarchal customs of the House of Austria, he spoke as an individual rather than as a sovereign, as head of the family rather than as head of the empire. "'T is to prove to you after my death that I loved you during my lifetime that I leave to you these instructions, as rules by which you may regulate your conduct, and as precepts from which I have ever derived benefit."

He exhorted them above all to remain sincere upholders of the Catholic faith and believers in God, "who alone can give us not only our eternal heritage, which is our real happiness, but our only true satisfaction in this world. . . . It is an essential point, and one which I know not how to impress upon you strongly enough, never under any circumstances whatsoever to deceive yourselves about what is wrong, or try to think it innocent. . . . The world where you must pass your life is but transitory; there is nought save eternity that is without end. Let this reflection prevent your fixing your affections upon anything here too strongly; but as God himself has sanctioned amusements, and that we should take delight in all that his bounty has so lavishly provided for the gratification of our senses, it is right for us to enjoy them according to his permission. . . . We should enjoy the pleasures of this life innocently; for so soon as they lead us

into evil, of whatever sort it may be, they cease to be pleasures, and become a source of remorse and chagrin. . . . We are not put into this world for our pleasure only, and God has granted all these diversions but as a relaxation for the spirit. . . . When it is necessary to command, do not do so without previous consideration of what you command, and the reasons for and against, and then give the order gently. . . . Have no particular affection for any one thing, — above all, no passion, to which you should never abandon yourselves, for they all lead to unhappiness."

Then, after recommending to his children "reserve and discretion, very necessary qualities," — for "there is no use in saying all that one thinks," — and charity toward the poor, "which is a good deed in the sight of God, and makes one beloved in this world," he adds, —

"The chief care of a sovereign should be not to burden his subjects in order to sustain a luxury which is not needful to the support and tranquillity of these same subjects, nor to the preservation and good of the State. . . .

"But I do not mean to say by that, that we should not live conformably to the state to which God has called us, and in which he wishes us to live according to his laws; but the two are easily reconciled. . . .

"Another thing which I believe necessary that I should recommend to you is that you should never be idle. The company which you keep is also a very delicate matter; for often our companions lead us into many things into which we cannot fall as they. Every one should be on one's guard in this respect; above all, persons like you, my children, should be careful, who are often surrounded by a crowd of people who seek but to flatter your inclinations, and lead them whither they think they tend, in order thus to pay court and win credit and favour without considering either your good or that of the world; 't is sufficient for them if they gain either favour or money.

"Friendship is a sweetener of life; it is only necessary to be watchful where one places one's friendship, and not to be too prodigal of it; for all the world does not make good use of it, and often there are false friends who seek but to profit by the confidence one reposes in them to abuse it, either for their own ends or otherwise, and thus do us much harm. Therefore I advise you, my dear children, never to be precipitate in placing your confidence in any one of whom you are not very sure, and whom you have not tested for a long time, for people in this world know how to dissemble for a long time."

Finally, after having recommended to his children order, a wise economy, a horror of high play, harmony among themselves, and

an inviolable attachment to the head of the house, he traces for them a veritable rule of life, year by year, week by week, day by day, hour by hour, and finishes with these grave words: —

"I recommend you to take two days in every year to prepare for death, as though you were sure that those two were the last days of your life; and thus you will accustom yourself to know what you ought to do under those circumstances, and when your last moment arrives, you will not be surprised, but will know what you have to do. . . . You will recognize the utility of this by the practice of it, and it will do you an infinity of good without doing you any harm; for you will be doing calmly what perhaps illness or lack of time may prevent your doing.

"I herewith command you," he concluded, "to read these instructions twice yearly; they come from a father who loves you above everything, and who has thought it necessary to leave you this testimony of his tender affection, which you cannot better reciprocate than by loving one another with the same tenderness he bequeaths to all of you."

Were these austere precepts followed? Did Marie Antoinette, perchance, amid the splendours of Versailles and the allurements of the court, stop and lose herself in the contemplation of death? We know not; but does it not seem as though there were some mysterious divination of his daughter's future in this last counsel of the father? And does not the image of death, and of a frightful death, seem to follow with threat and jeer each step of the historian as he advances in the biography of this gracious and unfortunate queen?

"Over what people wouldst thou like to reign?" Maria Theresa asked Marie Antoinette one day. "Over the French," the child replied gayly, "because it was over them that Henri IV. and Louis XIV. reigned, — the Good and the Great." The expression was happy; and the empress was so delighted with it that she begged the French ambassador to communicate it immediately to the king, his master. The wishes of the daughter were in harmony with the policy of the mother in favouring a union which the king of France also desired no less than they.

The arrangement was concluded long before it was announced. Louis XV. informed himself through his minister to Vienna, the Marquis de Durfort, of the progress and education of the archduchess. He sent the painter Ducreux from France to paint her portrait; and the portrait finished, he was in such haste to see it that the ambassador was obliged to send his son to carry it to Versailles. In Germany orders were given to repair the roads

along which the future dauphiness should travel into France. At Vienna itself Maria Theresa surrounded her daughter with everything that might keep her in mind of France. She gave her a French coiffure; she wished, above all, to give her a French education, and with this end in view she begged Choiseul to choose for her some clever and loyal tutor who could train the young princess in the usages and traditions of the court of France. Choiseul was undecided, when the archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne, spoke to him of the Abbé de Vermond, librarian of the Collège des Quatre Nations. The praise which the prelate bestowed upon his protégé determined the minister's choice; and a few days later the Abbé de Vermond set out for Vienna, where he took official possession of his post.

The Abbé de Vermond was of a grave and studious disposition, not altogether disinterested, perhaps, but loyal, despite all that Madame Campan has said in her "Mémoires," wherein she sought to vilify him, no doubt from professional jealousy and because of the rivalry of their positions; nor did he ever play that odious part toward his royal pupil of which the first waiting-woman has accused him. He did not seek, "from cunning and wicked calculation, to keep her ignorant." His letters, which are now known, prove that he conscientiously fulfilled his mission, and that he exerted himself without ulterior motive to fill the gaps which the mistaken tenderness of the Countess von Brandeiss had left in the education of the archduchess.

As soon as he arrived in Vienna he made out a plan of instruction, which the empress approved. This embraced the study of the religion and history of France, with especial attention to the characteristic peculiarities of its habits and customs, an acquaintance with the great families, and, above all, with those whose members held offices about the court, a general survey of French literature, and particular application to the language and orthography. In order to make these studies interesting to a young girl who was little habituated to restraint, they were carried on as far as possible by conversation, — a tempting method, which had the advantage perhaps of instilling knowledge more easily into a mind so difficult to fix, but which had the serious disadvantage of leaving uncorrected her very lack of industry, a fault inimical to any real progress.

Sometimes, when he was tracing the general history of the French monarchy, the tutor would pause to sound the judgment

of his pupil concerning the conduct of kings, and especially of queens; and he had the pleasure of finding that her judgment was almost always just. The young princess possessed a remarkably clear mind, but unfortunately was indolent in any sustained exercise of it. "I cannot accustom her," the abbé said, "to investigate any subject thoroughly, although I feel that she is quite capable of it." When one considers this, and the gibes of people who thought that the education of the archduchess was becoming too French, the natural jealousy with which the natives regarded a foreigner, the short time at Vermond's disposal, — only one hour a day at Vienna, — the obligatory distractions of her life, which was beginning to be less secluded, it is easy to understand that the progress which the pupil made was not as rapid as the master desired.

There was progress, however. At Schoenbrunn, where one was not so miserly of the hours devoted to study, they made up in the conversations for what had not been done in the regular lessons; and when one day in the autumn of 1769, Maria Theresa descended to her daughter's room, and questioned her for nearly two hours, she declared herself satisfied with her improvement. She found her "entirely capable of reasoning and of judgment, above all, in matters of conduct." At court, where the archduchess appeared more and more frequently as the time of her marriage approached, the impression she made was not less favourable. Every one was both surprised and charmed by the "expression of kindness, affability, and gayety in her charming countenance."

At an entertainment given to her at Saxeburg, on the Eve of Saint Antony, the young princess delighted every one by her bearing and conversation. Even Kaunitz, *blasé* as he was, was astonished. Mercy, who had come to Austria in the beginning of 1770, was equally flattered to see that the future dauphiness of France listened to him, and profited by his counsel. Little by little she was initiated into public life and the art of receiving. Twice a week the cavagnole was held in her apartment, and on other days a lottery. The princes of the imperial family and the ambassadors were admitted; the entertainment continued until ten o'clock. Marie Antoinette, or rather Madame Antoine, — it was the name they still gave her, — exerted herself to show an interest in each one; and an eye-witness adds that she succeeded. "This noble company gave her the best bearing and

tone possible; every one was delighted with her, and the empress more than all."

Everything was preparing for her approaching union, nor were the preparations made lightly. The mother and daughter faced the ambitious future, which they both desired, with an almost religious gravity. It was decided that the archduchess should go into retreat for three days during Holy Week under the direction of the Abbé de Vermond.

Frivolous as she was, the young girl meant to make the retreat a serious one; she even regretted that it was to be so short. "It may take me a longer time to lay all my thoughts before you," she remarked to her preceptor.

Her departure approached. From the 1st of July, 1769, the Marquis de Durfort had been arranging the details of the marriage with the Prince von Kaunitz. The plan of the contract was submitted to the king on his return from Compiègne, and on the 13th of January, 1770, the last note from the court of Vienna was transmitted to Versailles. During the first days of April the official congratulations began; on the 2d, the German and Hungarian *gardes-nobles* were admitted to kiss the hand of the archduchess; on the same day the rector of the University delivered an address to her in Latin, and she replied in the same tongue; on the 3d, it was the turn of the officers of the garrison and of the magistrates.

On the 14th of April the empress announced officially to her ministers the marriage of her daughter to the dauphin of France. On the 16th, the "Gazette de France" records, "The court being in full dress, the ambassador of France had a solemn audience with their Royal and Imperial Majesties, when, in the name of the king, his master, he demanded Madame the Archduchess Antoinette as consort for Monseigneur the Dauphin."

After this ceremony a drawing-room was held at the palace. When the ambassador arrived he was received by the chief officers of their Majesties; the palace guards lined the grand staircase; the infantry life guards were in the first antechamber; the German and Hungarian *gardes-nobles* formed a double file in the other rooms; and the court was both numerous and brilliant. The ambassador went first to have audience of the emperor, then of the empress-queen, of whom he demanded, in the name of his most Christian king, the hand of Madame the Archduchess. Her Royal and Imperial Majesty having given her consent, her

Royal Highness was summoned to the audience-chamber, where, after having made a profound reverence to the empress and received her permission, she took from the hands of the ambassador a letter from Monseigneur the Dauphin and a portrait of that prince, which was then hung round her neck by the Countess von Trautmansdorff, head-mistress of the household of her Royal Highness. Toward half-past eight the court repaired to the theatre, which was magnificently decorated and illuminated. "La Mère Confidente," a comedy by Marivaux, was given, and afterward a new ballet composed by Noverre, called "Les Bergers de Tempe."

On the following day, the 17th, pursuant to the custom observed under such circumstances by the House of Austria, the archduchess made, in the presence of the ambassador of France and of the emperor, the empress, and the ministers and councillors of state, her renunciation of the hereditary succession, both paternal and maternal. The Prince von Kaunitz read the form of the renunciation; Marie Antoinette signed it, and took her oath upon the Bible, which the Count von Herberstein, coadjutor of the Prince-Bishop von Laybach, held for her. On the same day the emperor gave a magnificent entertainment at the Belvedere; a hundred men had worked for more than two months on the preparations for it. There was supper for fifteen hundred persons, a masked ball, fireworks, — in fact, nothing was lacking that could add to the brilliancy of the celebration.

On the 18th it was the French ambassador's turn. The streets which led to the Lichtenstein palace, where the embassy had its lodging, were brilliantly illuminated; the avenues, the entrance, the interior, were all decorated in exquisite taste, while at the foot of the garden rose a beautiful edifice representing the Temple of Hymen, from which after nightfall rose sparkling sheaves of sky-rockets.

On the 19th, at six o'clock in the evening, the whole court betook itself to the Church of the Augustines through the gallery leading from the palace, which was guarded on either side by a double file of grenadiers. The empress conducted her daughter, who was magnificently attired in a robe of cloth-of-silver, while the Countess von Trautmansdorff carried her train. The Archduke Ferdinand represented the dauphin. When the emperor and empress were seated on the dais, the archduke and the archduchess knelt at the spot prepared for them. The nuncio of

the Pope, Visconti, blessed the rings, and gave the august couple the nuptial benediction. Then he entoned the *Te Deum*, which was sung by the court musicians to the accompaniment of cannon and musketry. The marriage by proxy was accomplished; the archduchess was now dauphiness; and the Comte de Lorge, son of the ambassador, the Marquis de Durfort, immediately set out to carry the news to Versailles.

On the following day the court dined in public; a drawing-room was held in the evening, and a medal was struck bearing Hymen and Concord, weaving myrtle wreaths and bearing horns of plenty, with this device: *Concordia novo sanguinis nexu firmata.*

Yet in the midst of these bewildering *fêtes* and striking spectacles, I know not what sadness weighed upon all hearts and oppressed all breasts. Was it simple grief at parting, or was it that mysterious fear which in solemn hours disturbs even the most steadfast souls? However brilliant the destiny of the young bride appeared, the future was clouded by uncertainty and the present by separation.

Clear-sighted as she was, and exactly informed by her faithful ambassador, Mercy, of all that was taking place at the French court, Maria Theresa was not dazzled by the great future opening before her daughter. She could not but know how undermined and tottering was the throne upon which the archduchess should one day sit. A story is told that before the departure of Marie Antoinette she was desirous of consulting a celebrated thaumaturgus, Dr. Gasser, concerning her future. The doctor regarded the young princess for a long time, hesitated awhile, and then said with a serious mien that there were crosses for all shoulders.

Whatever may be the truth of this anecdote, which is perhaps only a legend, every one at Vienna grieved over the departure of the young princess who had never shown anything but kindness and graciousness toward them. Men and women all felt regret. The avenues and the streets were filled with a sad-faced crowd. "The capital of Austria presents the appearance of a city of mourning," one eye-witness writes.

On the 21st of April, at half-past nine in the morning, the new dauphiness took leave of her mother, and set forth from the city of Vienna, which she was never to see again, on her way to France. The emperor accompanied her as far as Molek: he

could not bring himself to leave his sister, whom he often scolded, but whom he loved none the less. When on the following day at noon he re-entered Vienna, he found the city still plunged in sadness and Maria Theresa bathed in tears.

On the day of departure, the 21st, the empress had roused herself for a time from her grief to trace for her daughter a rule of conduct in which one knows not whether most to admire the wisdom of her policy, the insight of the mother, or the faith of the Christian.

Like the Emperor Francis, she sought to prepare the young princess for the obstacles she might find along her path; but being addressed to Marie Antoinette alone, her instructions were of a more personal and precise character. Like the emperor, she also recommended piety above everything as the chief and fundamental virtue. She repeated in general its precepts, those of a broad and indulgent piety, which is ever a refuge for those who practise it, without being a singularity or a burden to others; nor did she forget the duties suited to the exalted position her daughter was destined to fill, and certain rules of conduct peculiar to the court of France.

"Do not undertake any recommendations," she wrote; "listen to no one, if you would be at peace. Have no curiosity, — this is a fault which I fear greatly for you; avoid all familiarity with your inferiors. Ask of Monsieur and Madame de Noailles, and even exact of them, under all circumstances, advice as to what, as a foreigner and being desirous of pleasing the nation, you should do, and that they should tell you frankly if there be anything in your bearing, discourse, or any point which you should correct. Reply amiably to every one, and with grace and dignity; you can if you will. You must learn to refuse. . . . After Strasburg you must accept nothing without taking counsel of Monsieur and Madame de Noailles; and you should refer to them every one who would speak to you of his personal affairs, saying frankly that being a stranger yourself, you cannot undertake to recommend any one to the king. If you wish you may add, in order to make your reply more emphatic, 'The empress, my mother, has expressly forbidden me to undertake any recommendations.' Do not be ashamed to ask advice of any one, and do nothing on your own responsibility."

Fifteen days later, on May 4, the *cortége* being then not far from France, the empress, who could not console herself for her daughter's departure, save in thinking of her and following her in every stage of her journey, wrote to her again to add fresh counsel for the conduct of her life.

"You will find a tender father who will also be your friend if you deserve it," she said. "Put entire confidence in him; you will run no risk. Love him, obey him, seek to divine his thoughts; you cannot do enough at this moment, when I am losing you. . . . Concerning the dauphin, I shall say nothing; you know my delicacy on this point. A wife should be submissive in everything to her husband, and should have no thought but to please him and to do his will. . . . The only true happiness in this world lies in a happy marriage; I know whereof I speak. Everything depends on the wife if she be yielding, sweet, and amusing.

"I counsel you, my dear daughter, to re-read my paper on the 21st of every month. I beg you to be true to me on this point. My only fear for you is negligence in your prayers and studies; and lukewarmness succeeds negligence. Fight against it, for it is more dangerous than a more reprehensible, even wicked, state; one can conquer that more easily. Love your family; be affectionate to them, — to your aunts as well as to your brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. Suffer no evil-speaking; you must either silence the persons, or escape it by withdrawing from them. If you value your peace of mind, you must from the start avoid this pitfall, which I greatly fear for you, knowing your curiosity."

In the mean while the dauphiness was traversing Germany. On the 25th she arrived at Munich; on the 29th at Augsburg; on the 30th at Gunzburg. All along her route the people assembled in crowds, anxious to see an archduchess of Austria and dauphiness of France; they returned charmed by her condescension, her beauty, her amiability, and her air of sweetness. During her journey the ladies who accompanied her sought to divert her. One of them having been indiscreet enough to say to her, "Are you very anxious to see Monseigneur the Dauphin?" the young princess replied in a tone of dignity, "Madame, I shall be at Versailles in five days; on the sixth I can more easily answer your question." Having administered this reproof, she resumed her air of gayety and amiability, but her thoughts turned obstinately toward her native country and those she was leaving behind. When they crossed the boundaries of the provinces under the dominion of the empress, she burst into tears. "Alas!" she cried, "I shall never see her again!"

It was the last cry of her heart, her farewell to all the associations of childhood, to all her family ties, to all that she had loved in her German fatherland. From the moment she set foot on France she felt herself a Frenchwoman.

CHAPTER II.

THE DAUPHINESS OF FRANCE. — STRASBURG. — NANCY. — RHEIMS. — COMPIÈGNE. — PORTRAIT OF THE DAUPHINESS. — MARIE ANTOINETTE AT ST. DENYS. — SUPPER AT LA MUETTE WITH MADAME DU BARRY. — CELEBRATION OF THE MARRIAGE AT VERSAILLES. — THE PRETENSIONS OF THE PRINCESSES OF THE HOUSE OF LORRAINE. —CELEBRATIONS IN PARIS. — THE CATASTROPHE ON LA PLACE LOUIS XV. — LETTER FROM THE DAUPHIN TO THE LIEUTENANT OF THE POLICE.

ON the 3d of May, the Comte de Noailles, ambassador extraordinary to meet the dauphiness, entered Strasburg. It was in that city, won for France by Louis XIV., that he was to greet in the name of France the wife of the great-grandson of Louis XIV. On the 5th of May the Comtesse de Noailles, lady-in-waiting, the Comte de Tessé, chief equerry, the Comte de Saulx, gentleman-in-waiting, arrived in their turn with the household of the dauphiness. Finally on the 7th, toward noon, Marie Antoinette herself appeared on the banks of the Rhine.

On an island in the middle of the river a pavilion had been erected, destined for the ceremony of the *delivery*, as it was called; that is, the moment when the young princess should pass from the hands of her German household into those of her French household. By a strange want of thought the tapestries chosen from the collection belonging to the crown to decorate the great hall which for the first time should shelter beneath a French roof the young wife on her way to join her husband, represented the unhappy loves and bloody quarrels of Jason and Medea; in other words, a " picture of the most unfortunate union that ever took place." Strange pictures, and a strange welcome! Goethe, who was then a student at Strasburg, was struck on seeing these tapestries as with a gloomy presage, and it is said that the archduchess on perceiving them could not restrain an expression of fear. "Ah," she cried, " what an omen! "

The pavilion of the Rhine was divided into three rooms: in the middle a vast salon, where the *delivery* was to take place; to the right and left two apartments, one occupied by the French household, the other by the German. It was in the latter that the dauphiness had to undergo the trying ceremony of the toilette. Etiquette demanded that she should discard everything that could remind her of her native country, even to her stockings and underlinen. When she had submitted to this vexatious operation, and was re-dressed in the costume sent from Paris, "she looked a thousand times more charming in the French fashion than she did before," an eye-witness wrote. The doors were opened; the dauphiness passed into the central salon, where she was received by the Comte de Noailles, Bouret, secretary of the king's cabinet, and Gérard, first secretary of foreign affairs. When full powers had been exchanged, and the documents of delivery and reception had been signed by the respective commissioners, the room where the French household was waiting was opened. The dauphiness, lithe and graceful, advanced toward the Comtesse de Noailles, threw herself into her arms, and begged her to be her guide, her support, her consolation. At that moment the ladies of the German household approached their young mistress to kiss her hand for a last time, and then retired; she pressed them to her heart, weeping, and charged them with many tender messages for her mother, her sisters, her friends at Vienna; then turning toward her French ladies, she said, smiling through her tears, "Pardon me, these are for the family and the fatherland I am leaving; for the future I shall not forget that I am French."

The city of Strasburg was in gala array. It had prepared for the dauphiness the splendours it had displayed twenty-five years before for the journey of Louis the Well-beloved. Twelve years later Marie Antoinette still preserved a grateful memory of it. It was there, she said, that she had received the first homage of the French, and had realized the happiness of becoming their queen. Three companies of young children of from twelve to fifteen years of age, habited as *Cent-Suisses*, formed the line along the passage of the princess. Twenty-four young girls of the most distinguished families of Strasburg, dressed in the national costume, strewed flowers before her; and eighteen shepherds and shepherdesses presented her with baskets of flowers. When she set foot on the territory of the city Monsieur d'Antigny, the chief

magistrate, addressed her in German. "Do not speak German, Monsieur," she said; "from to-day I understand no other language but French."

When she entered the city in the coach of the king a triple discharge of artillery greeted her, all the bells rang out, and the Maréchal de Contades received her under a magnificent triumphal arch. On the square in front of the city hall fountains of wine ran for the people, whole beeves were roasted, and the distribution of bread was so abundant that no one took the trouble to pick up the pieces.

The dauphiness traversed the city between a double file of soldiers, and descended at the episcopal palace, where the Cardinal de Rohan, bishop of Strasburg, presented the chapter to her. In the evening there was a grand banquet, presentation of the ladies of the nobility, plays given by the various guilds, a dance executed by the coopers, and a spectacle at the Comédie Française. When night fell the entire city seemed to be on fire: the houses and public edifices were illuminated; lines of fire outlined the cathedral from top to bottom, throwing into luminous relief the graceful details of Erwin von Steinbach's masterpiece. Opposite the bishop's palace, on the other side of the river, was a vast colonnade, under the arches of which gardens were seen stretching away into the distance; an artificial parterre carried on boats floated on the river adjoining the gardens, and the trees twinkled with coloured globes. At the same time a magnificent display of fireworks on the island, representing hundreds of mythological figures, coats-of-arms, chariots, marine gods, the intertwined monogram of the dauphin and dauphiness, transformed the river into a sheet of fire.

On the following day, the 8th, Marie Antoinette visited the cathedral. By a strange coincidence the prelate who awaited her with the chapter at the entrance to felicitate her, and who greeted in her "the soul of Maria Theresa about to unite itself to the soul of the Bourbons," was the nephew of the bishop, that prince, Louis de Rohan, who was later to inflict upon the dauphiness, become queen, the deadliest of injuries. But in the midst of the then so brilliant prospect who could discern these shadows?

From Strasburg the dauphiness went to Saverne, where she was lodged in the château of the bishops. The Cardinal de Rohan presented to her a woman who was a hundred years old, and who had never been ill. "Princess," the woman said to her in Ger-

man, "I pray to Heaven that you may live to be as old as I, and as free from infirmities." "I hope I may," replied the dauphiness, "if it be for the good of France." After giving her her hand to kiss, she ordered a sum of money to be given to her.

In the evening there was a ball; after the ball fireworks; after the fireworks a supper, at which for the last time the ladies of the German household of Marie Antoinette met together with the ladies of the French household. On the 9th they definitely took leave of the archduchess, the Prince von Stahremberg alone remaining to accompany her.

The dauphiness left Alsace delighted with the welcome which she had there received. The peasants collected from all parts along her route; the roads were strewn with flowers; young girls in their best frocks brought her bouquets. The population of the country, ever eager for a spectacle, and then so ardent in their love for their princes, pressed close to the carriage, and perceiving through the window the fresh and gracious countenance of the young woman, they cried, "How pretty our dauphiness is!" A lady of her suite who overheard this repeated it to the princess. "Madame," replied Marie Antoinette, "the French look upon me with indulgent eyes."

On the evening of the 9th the dauphiness arrived at Nancy, illuminated as Strasburg had been. Nancy was the cradle of the House of Lorraine, the birthplace of the Emperor Francis; it was the last bond of union between the family of her origin and the family of her adoption, — between Austria and France. On the following day, after the official ceremonies, she betook herself to the convent of the Cordeliers to kneel at the tomb of her forefathers. The grave idea of death mingled with the excitement of the celebrations.

That evening Marie Antoinette slept at Bar; at Luneville the gendarmerie, on the order of the Marquis de Castries and the Marquis d'Autichamp, accorded her military honours. At Commercy the archduchess received a token of homage that went more directly to her heart: a fair-haired child of ten offered her a bouquet, and greeted her as "the descendant of a family who for almost a thousand years had reigned over the hearts of the people of Lorraine."

A few miles from Châlons an old country curé, surrounded by his parishioners, approached the dauphiness's coach to pay his respects. He had taken as the text for his discourse the

words from the Canticle of Canticles: "Pulchra es et formosa." But at the sight of the princess respect, emotion, and surprise so disturbed him that he could not proceed farther than his text. He racked his brains in vain; his memory obstinately deserted him. Marie Antoinette, perceiving this, and in order to put an end to the embarrassment of the good man, took from his hand, with a charming smile of thanks, the bouquet which he had for her. "Ah, Madame," cried the good curé, recovering, if not his discourse, at least his presence of mind, "do not be astonished at my lack of memory; at sight of you Solomon would have forgotten his address, and would never more have thought of the beautiful Egyptian!"

On the 11th the dauphiness descended at the Hôtel de l'Intendance at Châlons. Six young girls, dowered by the city on the occasion of her marriage, recited these lines to her:—

"Princess, who with wit, loveliness, and grace
Comes to add lustre to our race,
On this day memorable what happiness we 've won!
'T is to thy splendid nuptials that we owe our own.
From this proud alliance two benefits shall spring
To tune the State in greater consonance:
We shall give subjects liege to France,
While you shall give to her her king."

In the evening there was a representation, when "La Partie de Chasse de Henri IV." was played, a supper in public, an illumination which represented the temple of Hymen, the inauguration of a new gate to the city, of which the dauphiness accepted the dedication, distribution of bread, wine, and meat, and repeated acclamations of "Long live the King! Long live Madame the Dauphiness!"

On the 12th Marie Antoinette passed through Rheims, the coronation city. "This is the city of France," she said tactfully, "which I hope to revisit at the latest possible date."

That evening she arrived at Soissons, surrounded by a body-guard which had accompanied her from Fismes. The citizens and the arquebusiers met her at the gates of the city. The streets which led to the bishop's palace, where the princess was to lodge, were decorated in a singular and picturesque fashion. There was a double row of fruit-trees, twenty-five feet high, between which hung garlands of ivy, flowers, gold and silver gauze, interspersed with lanterns. The dauphiness was received

at the steps of the palace by the bishop-duke of Soissons, and conducted to her apartment through a gallery lighted by a thousand candles. Distributions were made to the people, and in the evening a wonderful display of fireworks showed to the enthusiastic crowd a temple surmounted by two groups: Fame announcing the dauphiness of France, and a genius presenting to Fame her portrait.

On the following day, faithful to the teachings of her mother, Marie Antoinette received the communion from the hands of the bishop in the palace chapel, and in the evening assisted at a solemn *Te Deum* in the cathedral. In the afternoon of the 14th she set out on the road to Compiègne.

In one of the towns through which she passed, some professors and students paid their respects to her in Latin, and she was sufficiently learned to reply to the young Ciceros in the same tongue.

The whole journey from Strasburg to Compiègne had been one long and brilliant triumph for the princess. Everywhere along her route the people in gala attire had crowded; everywhere she had bewitched them by the condescension of her bearing, the freshness of her smile, the kindliness of her greeting, the propriety of her remarks, — by "her gentle gayety and dignified affability," the "Gazette" said. "A touching spectacle," added the editor, "for a nation whose chief sentiment is a love of their rulers." Every one who saw the dauphiness went away delighted; every one who heard her was in raptures. "Our archduchess-dauphiness has surpassed all my hopes," Mercy wrote.

The entire royal family was assembled at Compiègne. The king had already sent the Marquis de Chauvelin to Châlons, the Duc d'Aumont to Soissons, the Duc de Choiseul some leagues from Compiègne, to meet the dauphiness. He himself left Versailles on the 13th with the dauphin and Mesdames, slept at Muette, and arrived at Compiègne on the 14th, there to await the wife of his grandson. The meeting took place at the Pont de Berne, in the middle of the forest. As soon as the young princess perceived the king, she jumped from her carriage, and ran and threw herself at his feet. Enchanted by her impulsive abandon, Louis XV. raised her, embraced her with great tenderness, and presented her to the dauphin, who according to etiquette kissed her upon the cheek. They returned to the château, the king on the back seat of the carriage with the dauphiness by his side, the

dauphin on the front seat with the Comtesse de Noailles. The king and the dauphin themselves conducted the dauphiness to her apartment, and there presented to her in turn the members of the royal family, — the Duc d'Orléans; the Duc and Duchesse de Chartres, the Prince de Condé, the Duc and Duchesse de Bourbon, the Prince de Conti, the Comte and Comtesse de la Marche, the Duc de Penthièvre, the Princesse de Lamballe. The king was delighted with this first interview; he found the dauphiness charming.

She was indeed charming; and the descriptions which the authors of that period have left readily explain the impression produced by so young and fresh an apparition on that aged monarch, who was not accustomed to find so much grace and so much modesty combined.

"The dauphiness," writes one chronicler, "was very well made and well proportioned in all her limbs." Her figure, which was slender and tall, had at the same time all the suppleness of the young girl and the dignity of the woman. Her features perhaps were not mathematically regular; they were pretty rather than beautiful: the oval of her face was somewhat too long, and her lips, particularly the under one, had the thickness characteristic of the Austrian lip. But her mouth was small and well arched; her arms superb; her hands perfectly formed; her feet charming; her nose aquiline, delicate, and pretty. Her hair, of a pale blond colour of a peculiar shade, crowned a forehead of marvellous purity. Her eyes, which were blue without being pale, sweet but not languishing, sparkled with vivacity and intelligence, and lighted up with a bewitching smile. Her complexion was of dazzling brilliancy, incomparably white, and relieved by a colour which had no need of rouge; her skin was of such transparency that it took no shadow, and was the despair of painters. "She was not beautiful," one of her contemporaries has said of her; "she was better than beautiful." Her walk exhibited at the same time the imposing air of the princesses of her family and all the French grace. All her motions were marked by suppleness and elegance: she did not walk; she glided. When she traversed the galleries of the château, her head, which she had a peculiar and altogether charming fashion of carrying bowed and then raising more haughtily when she thought herself alone, — her head, carried on her beautiful Greek neck, gave her so much majesty that it seemed as though one saw a goddess in the midst of her nymphs. "If one

should see her in the most humble garb," a traveller wrote who saw her for a moment during her journey, "it would be easy to divine that she had been born upon the throne;" and a celebrated Englishman, Horace Walpole, cried on perceiving her, "She is grace personified!"

A painter, having her portrait to paint, thought he could not do better than to place it in the centre of an open rose; and a poet added, —

"'T is the branch of a rose
Come to join our fair lily."

On the evening of her arrival at Compiègne the ladies who presided at her undress having said to her, "Madame, you delight every one," she replied: "They view me with too great partiality; my heart is contracting debts which it can never repay. I trust every one will credit me with the wish I have of doing so."

On the 15th of May the court left Compiègne. The *cortége* halted at St. Denys. Marie Antoinette went to see the daughter of Louis XV., Madame Louise, who had entered the Carmelites a little while before. She remained half an hour, and charmed every one. "Here is, my dear mother," a nun of St. Denys wrote to a Carmelite of the Rue St. Jaques, — "here is a perfect princess in face, figure, and manner, and what is more precious, they say that she is delightfully pious! Her physiognomy exhibits an expression of majesty, modesty, and sweetness. The king, Mesdames, and, above all, Monseigneur the Dauphin, seemed enchanted with her, and vied with one another in repeating, 'She is incomparable!'"

All along the route of the procession the spectators were not less enraptured. The rumour of the passage of the dauphiness had spread; the inhabitants of Paris had congregated *en masse* between Versailles and the Porte Maillot; the carriages formed a double line; the people applauded; the crowd was so compact that the royal equipage had to proceed at a walk. When the attention of the princess was called to this great affluence, she, with her perfect amiability and fine tact, feigned to believe that all this homage was intended for the old monarch. "The French can never see enough of their king," she said; "they cannot treat me with more kindness than in proving to me that they know how to love one whom I am already accustomed to regard as a second father."

At seven o'clock in the evening Marie Antoinette arrived at

La Muette. There the king awaited her, and with him the Comte de Provence, the Comte d'Artois, Madame Clotilde, and also, alas! that miserable woman at whose feet Louis XV. dishonoured the most beautiful crown in existence, and who had elicited from his culpable condescension permission to sup with the dauphiness. The young princess was profoundly hurt: her proud purity revolted against the impure contact which the despotic weakness of the old king imposed upon her; but she had sufficient self-control to give no outward sign of her secret displeasure. After supper one of the courtiers who lay in wait for her inexperience asked her how she had found the Comtesse du Barry. She discerned the trap, and answered simply, "Charming."

Was it to forestall or to weaken the bad impression produced by this strange society that Louis XV. carried to his granddaughter at La Muette a magnificent set of diamonds, and on the day following the marriage sent to her a chest exquisitely carved by Bocciardi, full of ornaments? He ever overwhelmed her with presents. He gave her all the diamonds and pearls of the late dauphiness, and he added the collar of pearls formerly worn by Anne of Austria, and entailed by her on the queens and dauphinesses of France; the smallest of these pearls was as large as a nut.

On Wednesday, the 16th of May, at nine o'clock, Marie Antoinette left La Muette for Versailles, where her toilette was to take place. The king and the dauphin had preceded her the evening before. When she arrived at the château, the king received her on the ground-floor, discoursed for some time with her, and presented to her Madame Elisabeth, the Comtesse de Clermont, and the Princesse de Conti. At one o'clock she went to the apartment of the king, whence the *cortége* started for the chapel.

The dauphin and the dauphiness, followed by the old monarch, advanced toward the altar and knelt on a cushion placed on the steps of the sanctuary. The archbishop of Rheims, Monseigneur de la Roche-Aymon, grand almoner, offered them the holy water, then after having exhorted the young couple, blessed the thirteen pieces of gold and the ring. The dauphin took the ring and placed it on the fourth finger of the dauphiness, and gave her the gold-pieces. The archbishop pronounced the nuptial benediction, and as soon as the king had returned to his *prie-Dieu*, opened the mass. The royal choir sang a motet by the Abbé de Ganzargue; after the offertory the dauphin and dauphiness

went to make their offering. At the *Pater* a canopy of silver brocade was spread above their heads,—the bishop of Senlis, Monseigneur de Roquelaure, grand almoner to the king, holding it on the side of the dauphin, and the bishop of Chartres, grand almoner to the dauphiness, holding it on the side of that princess.

At the end of the mass the grand almoner approached the *prie-Dieu* of the king and presented to him the marriage register of the royal parish, which the curé had carried. Then the *cortége* returned to the king's apartment in the same order, and the dauphiness, after going to her own apartment, received the officers of her household and the foreign ambassadors.

An immense crowd filled the royal city. Paris was deserted: the shops were closed; the entire population had betaken itself to Versailles to assist at the celebrations and fireworks which were to finish the day.

But at three o'clock the sky became overcast; a violent storm burst; the fireworks could not be set off; the illuminations were drowned by the rain; and the crowd of curious people who filled the gardens and streets were obliged to flee in disorder before the peals of thunder and torrents of rain.

In the château, however, the day ended brilliantly. The courtiers, in sumptuous attire, eager to see and above all to be seen, crowded the apartments; a magnificent supper was served in the theatre, transformed into a banqueting-hall and lighted by "a prodigious number of candles." "All the ladies in full dress in the front of the boxes presented a sight as surprising as it was magnificent." The court had never seemed so brilliant.

At six o'clock a drawing-room was held, games of lansquenet, and a state dinner. In the evening the king conducted the newly married couple to their room. The archbishop of Rheims blessed the bed. The king gave the chemise to the dauphin, the Duchesse de Chartres to the dauphiness. But despite the splendour of the celebrations and the promising aspect of the future at that moment, certain obstinate pessimists could not help regarding the rumbling of the storm as a menace from Heaven; and the superstitious recalled that the young wife, in signing the marriage register, had let fall a blot of ink which had effaced half her name.

On the following day began at Versailles a long series of splendid entertainments,—drawing-rooms, balls given in the new theatre, built by the architect Gabriel; a representation of the opera of "Persée," of which certain details greatly amused the dauphin-

ess; fireworks; playing of the fountains; illuminations of the grand canal, of the terrace and gardens.

But with these entertainments also began the storms at court, not less violent and more treacherous than the storms of Heaven. At a ball on the 19th the minuet danced by Mademoiselle de Lorraine "caused much discontent." The ambassador from Austria, the Comte de Mercy, had asked the king on the occasion of the marriage of the dauphiness to show some particular mark of distinction to Mademoiselle Lorraine, daughter of the Comtesse de Brionne, and a relative of the emperor. Louis XV., desirous of manifesting "his gratitude to the empress for the present she had sent him," decided that Mademoiselle Lorraine should dance the minuet immediately after the princes and princesses of the blood. "The choice of the dancers depending solely on the will of the king, without regard to office, rank, or dignity," this honour accorded the daughter of the Comtesse de Brionne did not entail any consequences, nor give any pledge for the future. None the less it offended all the nobility. All the noblemen of the court, even the humblest, assembled at the house of the bishop of Noyon, second ecclesiastical peer, in the absence on business of the first peer, the archbishop of Rheims, and drew up a long memoir protesting that there could be no intermediate rank between the princes of the blood and the *haute noblesse*. The public was very much amused at this quarrel, and by the fact that the courtiers should assemble under the leadership of a bishop to deliberate gravely on the serious question of a minuet. Some one parodied the memoir of the *noblesse* in these witty verses, which ran over Paris: —

"Sire, the nobles of your State
Will see with greatest pain
A princess of Lorraine
Precedence o'er them arrogate.
If your Majesty hath planned
Thus to slight a faithful band,
We shall quit our lady's tresses,
Shall desert the violin.
Consider well: our seal we 've set.
Signed: Bishop of Noyon,
La Vaupalière, Bauffremont,
Clermont, Laval, and De Villette."

Louis XV. persisted. On the day of the ball the ladies who had been named for the dance made a point of traversing the

apartments of Versailles in undress; in the evening at five o'clock, the hour appointed, only three ladies were in the salon. It took a formal command from the king to force the others to appear. The entertainment was carried out in the manner determined upon, but not without a profound discontent; and of all the magnificence displayed at Versailles to celebrate the marriage of the dauphiness there remained but wounded vanity and a witticism: "How do you find my entertainments?" Louis XV. asked of the Abbé Terray. "Ah, Sire, no money can pay for them!" answered the comptroller-general.

But what were these court intrigues beside the catastrophe which two weeks later was to plunge the capital into mourning?

On the 30th of May the city of Paris in its turn celebrated by public rejoicings the marriage of the dauphiness. The celebration was to be crowned by fireworks on the Place Louis XV. facing the entrance of the Rue Royale, and by an illumination of the colonnades round the square. The preparations promised well. The principal decoration, in front of the statue of Louis XV., represented the temple of Hymen; at the four corners four dolphins were to pour forth fountains of fire, and at the four façades four streams were to fall in cascades of flame. A building placed behind the statue held the reserve of fireworks.

Unfortunately, in consequence of a conflict of jurisdiction, the superintendence of the celebration was not intrusted to the lieutenant of the police, Sartines, but to the provost of the merchants, Bignon. Owing to lack of experience or capacity, Bignon neglected to take the necessary precautions. The display of fireworks, instead of facing toward the Place Louis XV., which could have held a large number of spectators, was turned toward the Rue Royale, then in process of construction, where the heaps of materials and the ditches excavated for the sewerage obstructed the traffic. No rules had been published for the circulation of the carriages; and finally, the garden of the Tuileries, through which the crowd might have passed, had been closed at the usual hour.

The fireworks would not go off; was it a presage? A fuse, carelessly applied, ignited the bouquet before the time; the principal pieces failed. When all was finished, the people, who filled the Place Louis XV. and the Rue Royale, began to move. Two streams were formed, — one seeking to gain the square to see the illumination of the colonnades, and to partake of the fountains of



wine which had been running since seven o'clock; the other forcing its way through the Rue Royale to visit the fair, which was held along the boulevards. These two currents, advancing in opposite directions, blocked each other, and neither wished to give way. The crowds pressing from behind pushed and smothered those who were in front; the confusion was indescribable.

The police were not there. The *gardes de ville*, insufficient in number, made vain efforts to establish order; but what could a handful of men do against that compact mass of people, who pressed forward and would listen to nothing? The cries of some persons, who were being crushed or robbed by the scamps who swarmed in the crowd, augmented the tumult. To crown the evil, the reserve of fireworks and the scaffolding round the statue of the king caught fire. The firemen, with their big horses and heavy machines, hurried to the scene of the conflagration, forcing aside with violence the people massed in the Rue Royale, which was like a funnel already obstructed; carriages in search of their masters sought to pass in the wake made by the engines. Some spectators, half crushed, took sword in hand to liberate themselves; some pickpockets threw themselves into the squabble to take advantage of it, and increased the panic. The cries of women and children, who were being suffocated, the noise of horses, the oaths of the coachmen, the red light of the conflagration, — all contributed to spread terror through the crowd, who felt themselves perishing without being able to do anything to save themselves. Woe to him who fell! he was immediately trampled to death. The crowd, mad with fear and unable to resist the pressure from behind, sought to throw itself to one side; the people fell into the ditches which the authorities had neglected to cover over. The crowd precipitated itself into these yawning sepulchres, — each human wave swallowing up the one that had preceded it, and being swallowed up in its turn, amid the shrieks of the dying and the cries of the wounded. It was a horrible sight.

When a reinforcement of the guard, called at the last moment, finally succeeded in establishing order, it was too late. They removed one hundred and thirty-two corpses and five or six times as many wounded, and among them personages of distinction and foreign ministers. These corpses, ranged along the boulevard like a gloomy decoration, were buried on the following day in the cemetery of the Madeleine. Who could then have foretold

that they went there to await the princess whose marriage had been the occasion of their death?

The dauphiness was on her way from Versailles with Mesdames to view the illumination of the square, when she heard of the accident that had just happened. She turned back, her heart bursting, her eyes wet. Despite the care that was taken to conceal from her the extent of the catastrophe, she could not restrain her tears. "You do not tell me all!" she kept repeating. "How many victims!" And when to lessen her regrets, they told her that among the corpses many thieves had been taken whose pockets were full of stolen valuables, "Yes," she answered; "but they perished by the side of honest men."

She sent her purse immediately to Monsieur de Sartines to succour the families of the victims; the dauphin also sent his. He awaited, with an impatience which was not habitual to him, the moment when his month's allowance should be paid him; as soon as he received it, he hastened to forward the six thousand livres which was the amount of it to the lieutenant of the police, with the following note: —

I have learned of the accident which happened in Paris, and for which I am responsible; I am deeply distressed. They have brought me what the king allows me every month for pocket-money; I can dispose of only that, and I send it to you. Succour the most unfortunate.

I have great esteem, Monsieur, for you,

LOUIS AUGUSTE.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROYAL FAMILY IN 1770. — THE KING. — MESDAMES. — THE COMTE DE PROVENCE. — THE COMTE D'ARTOIS. — MESDAMES CLOTILDE AND ELISABETH. — THE DAUPHIN.

WHAT, then, was this royal family like, — the highest in the world at the time that Marie Antoinette entered it under auspices so brilliant and yet so gloomy?

The head of the family — the king, Louis XV. — was better than his reputation, and, above all, better than his conduct. His secret correspondence, now made public, shows that he was at bottom more anxious for the honour and glory of France than he appeared. At one time he even had the desire to govern it himself; but this noble and fleeting aspiration was soon stifled by the indolence of his mind, his distrust of himself, his taste for frivolity, and the domination of his mistresses.

Of a contradictory character, he possessed at the same time noble qualities and vulgar instincts, generous aspirations and selfish desires. In his youth he had shown great promise, — a quick intelligence, an attentive mind, an extraordinary memory, precocious reason, a keen and true discernment, a heart easy to move. The bad instruction of Villery, instead of developing these precious germs, destroyed them; from a gentle and good child, he became a self-willed, timid, and awkward one, and soon a youth deceitful and uninterested. *Ennui*, that was the canker which during fifty years devoured the heart of Louis XV.; it was often also the reason of his excess. He might have escaped from it through a noble passion for public affairs; the Cardinal de Fleury would not permit it. The old minister, in order the better to strengthen his own power, cultivated in his royal pupil a taste for frivolous things and for futile distractions. He made of him what he remained all his life, — "an infant from his head to his heels, always ten years behind his age," according to the saying of the regent. Thenceforward the young prince no longer

belonged to himself, but to him, or rather to her, who could best amuse him.

Louis XV. had inherited from his family great physical beauty, in which the majesty of his grandfather, Louis XIV., was subdued by the grace of his mother, the charming and lively Duchesse de Bourgogne. Despite this beauty, despite a dangerous precocity and the temptations of the ladies of the court, whose easy virtue would willingly have succumbed to so brilliant and profitable a fall, he remained chaste up to the age of twenty. As compensation for the lack of stronger qualities and discipline, his preceptor had at least inculcated religious principles which for a time held the ardour of his senses in check. Unfortunately his temptations were more lasting than his firmness; and the first step once made along the path of culpable pleasures, Louis XV., despite certain feeble desires to return, could not stop himself. From Madame de Mailly he passed to Madame de Vintimille, from Madame de Vintimille to the Duchesse de Châteauroux, from the Duchesse de Châteauroux to Madame de Pompadour and to the fugitive beauties of the Parc-aux-Cerfs. After the death of the dauphin and dauphiness, struck by this double blow from Heaven, he wished to retire within himself and break the chains that so shamefully bound him. Later he even contemplated a second marriage with the Princesse de Lamballe, it was said, then with one of the daughters of Maria Theresa, the Archduchess Elisabeth. An odious court intrigue dissipated these good intentions, and threw the old king, half repentant, into the arms of a courtesan of low birth, — "the vile remnant of public license," as the Abbé de Beauvais dared to say from the pulpit of Versailles. Whatever the weak monarch still possessed of virility perished in that shameful bond. The brilliant conqueror of Fontenay became but the humble slave of the Du Barry, enduring without a murmur her gross pleasantries and her grotesque nicknames, lending himself to her most ridiculous caprices, and but too happy to satisfy her luxurious fancies. The prince in whom D'Argenson had hailed a veritable talent for government, humanity, justice, good sense, an interest in affairs, a taste for economy, had grown to be an old man, sated, nonchalant, hating all work and all constraint, a good-for-nothing king in the literal sense of the term, — dividing his life between the hunt and small suppers in the *petites maisons*, with no taste for aught but the *petits cancans* of the court, rude anecdotes, and low conversation; lavishing money recklessly on his mistress, with no con-

cern for the future of his kingdom nor the complaints of his subjects; clever enough to perceive the abuses; too indifferent to seek to remedy them, remarking cynically to one of his courtiers, "Things as they are will last my time."

And as a just reward, in proportion as the king withdrew from his subjects, his people withdrew from him; and the acclamations which had greeted his youth were changed to murmurs and "fanatical discontent." France, who, as Michelet said, had loved the child with the devotion of mother, mistress, and nurse, had no longer any feeling for him but that of anger and dissatisfaction,—anger and dissatisfaction the more intense because her hopes had been great and her tenderness long-suffering. Louis XV. the Well-beloved had become Louis XV. the Well-hated.

With the king lived his daughters, Madame Adélaïde, Madame Victoire, Madame Sophie, truly pious princesses, but of a narrow-minded piety that knew not how to make itself lovely. Their exterior was without grace. Walpole, who saw them on his presentation at the court of France, describes them as "clumsy, plump old wenches, awkward in their bearing, confused in their manner, not knowing what to do or say." As they held themselves very much aloof, being embarrassed whenever it was necessary to appear in public, and timid even with their father, notwithstanding the fact that he treated them familiarly, neglecting the court and neglected by it, they never knew how to acquire the influence which their birth, it would seem, should have assured to them, and which Louis XV. on their return from Fontrevault, where they received their education, for the most part sufficiently neglected, seemed inclined to let them have. After the advent of the Du Barry they lived more retired than ever, occupying themselves with their music and horology, resolutely hostile to the favourite, whom they despised profoundly and with just cause, taking part secretly in underhand intrigues, and the more jealous of the appearance of consequence insomuch as they lacked the reality.

They were not, however, old women,—the oldest was but thirty-eight; but they were already old maids, with the easily wounded susceptibilities, the narrowness of mind, the instinct to rule, the timidity, the indirect methods, the little deceits, the jealousies, and the backbiting characteristic of that state.

Madame Adélaïde, the oldest of the three sisters, and also the most able, had brusque manners, a rough voice, a curt pronuncia-

tion, a certain masculine air which was not attractive. With a very exalted idea of the prerogatives of her rank, she suffered extremely from the insignificance to which she found herself reduced. Her mind, active, determined, and haughty, would gladly have aspired to an important rôle; but her talents not being great enough to support her pretensions, she avenged herself for the effacement which mortified her by small machinations and malice. Hostile to any alliance with the Hapsburgs, she could not pardon her new niece the blood which ran in her veins. Monseiur Campan, on his departure with the household of the dauphiness to receive her at the frontier, had presented himself at the apartment of the old princess to ask if she had any commands. "If I had any orders to give," she replied dryly, "they would not be to send for an Austrian."

More amiable than her sister, Madame Victoire was also more lovable; her household adored her. All those who came in contact with her were attracted by her unvarying kindliness, instinctive rather than the result of thought, but profound; she loved to give pleasure. Her early stoutness gained for her on the part of the king — who, by force of living with people of low condition, finished by acquiring their language — a grotesque surname; and malicious tongues declared that this corpulence of the princess was the effect of the savoury dishes which her *maître d'hôtel* served to her. She herself made no mystery of her tastes; she avowed with a sweet simplicity her fondness for good cheer and the luxuries of life. "Here is an armchair which will be my destruction," she said one day to Madame Campan. Of an apathetic nature, she succumbed to the ascendancy of her older sister, and allowed her to drag her into all sorts of malicious animosities which her heart often disavowed, but which her weak good-nature could not protest against.

Madame Sophie came between these two sisters; she was without wit as without grace, always timid, flurried, silent, and morose, never opening her lips save when there was a storm, nor her eyes but to look out of the corners of them like a hare, and counted for nothing at the court; she was but a minor satellite that revolved docilely and blindly round Madame Adélaïde.

Finally Madame Louise, *Madame Dernière*, as Louis XV. had called her at her birth, — Madame Louise, after having shared the life of her sisters for twenty years, had suddenly a month before renounced all the pomps of the court and all the luxuries of life,

to which she was, however, by no means insensible. One day, the 11th of April, 1770, at seven o'clock in the morning, she left Versailles without informing any one but her father, impelled by a sudden determination to put into execution an aspiration which she had cherished for eighteen years, and accompanied by only one lady and equerry, betook herself to the convent of the Carmelites at St. Denys, — the poorest of the order. The gates closed upon her; the daughter of France became the Mother Thérèse of St. Augustin. The court was stupefied; Mesdames seized with consternation. The king, in whom the heroic and unexpected resolution of Madame Louise awoke for a time, alas! too short, the faith of his childhood, and who wrote letters to her wherein he spoke as an affectionate father and a believing Christian, — the king, though for a while disturbed in his habits by not finding Madame Dernière with her sisters when he descended to take his coffee with them, soon resumed his old life, which his daughter was to expiate amid the austerities of the cloister.

Determined to make her sacrifice complete, the princess would allow no relaxation of the rule, accepting the severest mortifications and the most humiliating labours like the least novice. Unfortunately the turmoil of the world did not always die away at the gates of the convent at St. Denys. Mother Thérèse of St. Augustin remembered more than once that she was the daughter and the aunt of a king, and lent the authority of her voice and of her holy life to the political passions of her sisters and to their aspersions of their young niece, from whose hands, however, she had received the veil.

As to the brothers and sisters of the dauphin, the Comte de Provence was possessed of a keen and cultivated mind, but was of doubtful character; the Comte d'Artois was a brilliant trifler, with no thought but for his pleasures; Mesdames Clotilde and Elisabeth, still in the hands of their governess, the Comtesse de Marsan, were too young to have any past, and it was uncertain whether they were to have a future; they hardly counted at the court, and we hear nothing of them till later.

But the dauphin himself, whose destiny Marie Antoinette was to share, — what was he? What was his character? Who had formed it? What might be argued from it in that solemn hour, when the future of a whole life might depend on the first contact of two hearts that were to be united by the most indissoluble of all ties?

Louis Auguste, Duc de Berry, third son of the dauphin, son of Louis XV. and of Marie Josèphe of Saxe, was born on Aug. 23, 1754. His birth, which took place unexpectedly at Versailles while the court was at Choisy, was not surrounded by all the solemn ceremony customary at the birth of Children of France; and the courier charged to carry the news to the king was thrown from his horse and killed. Superstitious imaginations were struck by this sad incident, and the saying spread among the people that "the new prince was not born to luck."

The health of the Duc de Berry was delicate. His governess, the Comtesse de Marsan, *née* Rohan-Soubise, carried him to the country, to Bellevue. There the fresh air, exercise, and intelligent care soon triumphed over his original weakness. Under these fortifying influences, the temperament of the young prince acquired a vigour which it was never to lose; and when in the month of September, 1760, he was put into the hands of men, the dauphiness could well praise his robust appearance, in the same letter, alas! in which she was obliged to acknowledge the growing feebleness of her oldest son, the Duc de Bourgogne. Six months later, on the 22d of March, 1761, the Duc de Bourgogne died, and the Duc de Berry became heir-presumptive to the throne.

The governor of the Children of France was the Duc de la Vauguyon, a brave soldier, but of a narrow and vain mind. Not understanding that the dauphin, once married, was his own master, he sought to impose his supervision over the intimacy of the young couple, and being defeated in his calculation by the firmness of Marie Antoinette, tried wickedly to separate those whom he could not rule. The under-governor was the Marquis de Sinéty; the preceptor, Monseigneur de Coëtlosquet, bishop of Limoges; the under-preceptor was the Abbé de Radonvilliers, whose post was perhaps the most important, as it brought him into daily contact with his pupil, and whose influence was the most lasting, for twenty years later Necker accused him of governing France. He was a man of "subtle and shrewd understanding," according to the *chargé d'affaires* of Prussia. But the dauphin and dauphiness reserved the superintendence of their children's education for themselves. Unfortunately their enlightened direction did not long continue. The dauphin was carried away on the 20th of December, 1765; the dauphiness followed him to the grave on the 13th of March, 1767. The Duc de la



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Vauguyon alone remained in charge of the education of the heir to the crown.

The instruction of the young prince was serious and solid. His father had insisted that he should not be taught by play, as certain philosophers recommended at that time, but by serious and sustained application. Even after the death of the dauphin, these severe precepts were observed. Thanks to them, the mind of the Duc de Berry was furnished with useful and varied accomplishments. He knew Latin literature so thoroughly as to be able to discuss in an hour sadly solemn the respective merits of Livy and Tacitus; he understood Italian, spoke German fairly, and knew English sufficiently well to translate various works. By a singular choice, which one might regard as an omen, his first translation was of the History of Charles I. by Hume.

Here also he displayed his taste for history, which was his favourite study, and had no rival save perhaps in his fondness for geography. He was master of this latter science. To draw maps, to trace a map of the world, to construct the terrestrial sphere,—this was his pleasure; and we know that later it was he who prepared with his own hands instructions for the illustrious and unfortunate La Perouse, when he started on his great voyage round the world, from which he never returned.

The care for his education kept pace with that for his studies; but in the former the direction was not so fortunate, nor the result so satisfactory. If the preceptors of the young prince inculcated in him a true and profound piety, a steadfast attachment to the Catholic faith, a purity of mind that could withstand the temptations of a corrupt court, they knew not how to subjoin to these virtues, which are the proper heritage of all mankind, those more especially suited to a sovereign. They neglected to teach him that a monarch should not only mete out justice, but that he should wield the truncheon of the commander; and that he should know how, if need be, to draw his sword. They made of him a saint; they failed utterly in making of him a king.

Of an intense nature, but somewhat lacking in energy, sluggish and undecided in character, and shut up within himself, the Duc de Berry had many good qualities, but few that were lovable or strong. With his natural integrity, his admirable uprightness, his strong sense of justice, his ardent love for the people, he lacked that firmness which is imposing, and that outward charm and tact which pleases. Although he possessed in his whole

figure that air of dignity which the Bourbons never lost, and which his portraits plainly show; and while under impressive circumstances and on days of public ceremony one was struck by the majesty of his appearance, — nevertheless in ordinary life his step was heavy, his figure thick, his speech rude. His good-nature too often degenerated into weakness, his frankness into brusqueness, his raillery into sharpness. He should have come in contact with the world to have laid a solid foundation for the talents God had given him, — to have acquired the form which he lacked, that polish of ease and affability so necessary to a prince destined to live in the midst of the most polite society and on the first throne of the world, and to have gained at the same time that knowledge of men and things without which no king can conduct himself or his kingdom.

Instead of this, he was shut up in the most complete isolation. His father and mother, justly indignant at the scandals of the court, had made it a rule to live in retirement, and there to educate their children. After their death this tradition was too religiously respected. It developed in the young prince what are excellent qualities when confined within certain limitations, but which when carried too far become faults. It made him timid, awkward, distrustful of himself, "untamed," as Louis XV. said. "His mind insensibly contracted a habit of such exaggerated modesty," one historian wrote, "that he often sacrificed his own opinions to the most mediocre counsels." Surrounded by his brothers, whose talents, if less substantial, were more brilliant, the Duc de Berry, become dauphin, saw the courtiers withdraw from him, and pay their homage to the Comte de Provence or to the Comte d'Artois. This disturbed him, and rendered him more irresolute than ever. His heart, wounded by these marks of disdain, or at least of indifference, could not suppress a secret feeling of bitterness; and one day, when an orator from the country was complimenting him on his precocity, he replied: "You mistake, Monsieur. 'T is not I who am clever; 't is my brother, De Provence."

Deserted by the courtiers and neglected by the king, the dauphin buried himself in his solitary studies and manual labours. His robust physique had need of muscular exercise; he had a tower built, and organized workshops for carpentry and locksmith's work. It was in occupations of this sort that he passed the hours not given up to his studies or to the chase. The chase and the forge were his two favourite pastimes, one might almost

say his two passions. He had a third, even greater,—the passion for doing good; unfortunately he had no knowledge of how to do it. His life, isolated and thoughtful, might well have made him conceive a horror of the abuses he saw in the government, and inspired him with an ardent desire to correct them, but it was not able to give him that experience of the world without which one acts at venture, nor that energetic decision without which one falls into error.

With his retired habits, his cold and self-contained nature, his close reserve, it was impossible for the dauphin to be a wise director for the young wife confided to his care, nor a very affectionate husband. "He is not like other men," his grandfather said of him. Only a few days after his marriage, on the 23d of May, he said to the dauphiness, on entering her room in the morning, "Have you slept well?" to which Marie Antoinette replied, "Yes;" and the interview of husband and wife, then in their full honeymoon, limited itself to this brief exchange of words.

The poor dauphiness, whose tender and loving heart only asked to be repaid in kind, was quite chagrined by his coldness, which she could not understand. Her husband had indeed declared to his aunts that he had found her very amiable, and was pleased with her; she would have liked it better had he kept his satisfaction less shut up within himself; she felt sad and homesick at that court, where she found no demonstrative affection in response to hers, nor support for her first steps. She tried vainly to conquer the melancholy which took possession of her; her mind, if for a moment diverted, soon returned to its gloomy reflections, and fell again into revery. "My heart aches for her," Vermond wrote.

CHAPTER IV.

INTRIGUES AT COURT. — RIVAL PARTIES. — ESPIONAGE OF THE DUC DE LA VAUGUYON. — THE SUCCESSFUL DÉBUT OF THE DAUPHINESS. — THE COMTESSE DE GRAMONT. — ONE OF MARIE ANTOINETTE'S DAYS; HER READING. — COUNSELS OF MARIA THERESA. — AFTER SOME RESISTANCE THE DAUPHINESS FOLLOWS THEM.

RARELY, we believe, was a court more divided, more given up to factions, to underhand manœuvres, to envy and malice, than was the court of France in 1770. Two parties struggled for power: one, which was the party in the ascendant at that epoch, was called the Choiseul party, and had at its head the minister who had strengthened the Austrian alliance, and concluded the marriage of the dauphin to Marie Antoinette. He had with him public opinion, the Parliaments, or at least the Parliamentarians. The other, which was called the party of *dévots*, — though in reality the majority of those who composed it cared very little about religion; but they had gathered about them all who resented Choiseul's expulsion of the Jesuits, — had for its heads the Chancellor Maupeou, the Comtesse de Marsan, governess of the Children of France, who — one must do her that justice — succeeded in inspiring her pupils, Mesdames Clotilde and Elisabeth, with genuine sentiments of piety, but who was intriguing and vindictive, and who brought with her the powerful family of Rohan; the Duc d'Aiguillon, the enemy of La Chalotais, the despotic and stupid governor of Bretagne, who was upheld by the entire influence of the family of Richelieu; and the Duc de la Vauguyon, the pretentious and mediocre governor of whom we have already spoken, but whose office gave him an importance at the court. Mesdames, in memory of their brother and out of hatred for Choiseul, inclined toward the second party; and the ambitious Maupeou had also succeeded in enlisting Madame du Barry, who could not forgive the minister for the proud independence with which he treated her.

Between these two principal factions which divided the court were numerous minor ambitions, petty spites, vulgar and oftentimes shameful passions. It is not for us to delineate here a picture of French society during the latter part of the reign of Louis XV.; the traits of it are well known, and are found in every chronicle of the time. But it was a sad spectacle for a child of fifteen, chaste and pure, — that world of Versailles, where too often, in accordance with the example set by the master and his favourite, men had wives but to desert them, and women husbands but to betray them. It was difficult to walk on that slippery ground, and any false step was singularly dangerous. Whatever may have been Marie Antoinette's desire to hold aloof from political parties, it was impossible for her to escape them. From the moment of her appearance she was perforce classed with one or the other of the rival factions. Her gratitude and the counsels of her mother placed her in Choiseul's camp. This was enough to mark her for the hatred, cavilling, and machinations of every enemy of Choiseul. Some sought to undermine her influence before she possessed any; others, who were more adroit, sought to dominate her. Before Marie Antoinette was a month at Versailles she was entangled in such a network of intrigues as to be almost inextricable. Everything furnished material for mischief, complots, conflicts. It was the Abbé de Vermond whom they sought to remove; it was the Comtesse de Noailles whom they tried to estrange by a thousand vexations. Then it was a waiting-woman of doubtful fidelity whom they wished to introduce into the household of the dauphiness, or a suspected confessor whom they tried to give her. They made an effort to prejudice the king against her by spreading the report that she had refused to accompany him on his journeys. They used their utmost endeavours to alienate her husband from her.

This last task devolved upon the Duc de la Vauguyon. The former governor, being eager to preserve his ascendancy over the prince, whom he wished to dominate, and fearful of the influence that a fresh and charming young wife might gain over that unspoiled and virginal nature, spared no effort to separate husband and wife. Contrary to all etiquette, and despite the opposition of the Comtesse de Noailles, he claimed to have at all hours and by private passages entrance not only to the dauphin's apartment but to the dauphiness's. He even went further. One day Marie Antoinette and her husband were together in their apartment.

A *valet de chambre*, who was "either a fool or a good fellow," suddenly threw open the door, and they perceived Monsieur de la Vauguyon, who had crept up stealthily to listen, and who remained there rooted to the spot. Disconcerted at being thus detected, and unable to retreat, the duke found nothing to say in his defence. The dauphiness took occasion to represent to her husband the inconvenience of the indecent conduct of his governor; and the dauphin took her remonstrances in good part, feeling that they were but too just.

Despite all these cabals and pitfalls Marie Antoinette's advent was a success; we have it from a perfectly unprejudiced witness, a *pamphlétaire*. The king felt himself regenerated at the sight of that beautiful and pure child, whose appearance at Versailles, where too often virtue was dull and beauty licentious, had for a moment cleared the atmosphere of the court. He remarked indeed that she was somewhat gay, somewhat childish, but that, he immediately added, was but natural to her age.

In reality he found her charming. "I have my Duchesse de Bourgogne again," he often said. The public was charmed with the affability of the young princess; even the oldest courtiers were enraptured. Choiseul, after a conversation with her, was enthusiastic. "I never saw any one to equal her at her age," he said. And the Duc de Noailles, "the wittiest man in France, and the one who best understood the sovereign and the court," declared to Mercy that beyond doubt, "judging by the qualities one perceived in the princess, her charms would one day gain an all-powerful influence over the king."

The ladies of the dauphiness were not less pleased by the consideration she manifested for them, and the protection she accorded them. One notable example in the beginning showed with what ardour and firmness she could defend them on occasion. At Choisy during a performance the ladies of the palace had taken possession of the front seats, and refused to make room for the Comtesse du Barry and two of her intimate friends. There were some very sharp remarks exchanged; the favourite complained; and the king, yielding to her plaints, exiled one of the ladies of the dauphiness, the Comtesse de Gramont, who had been among the most outspoken against Madame du Barry, to fifteen leagues from the court. Some months later Madame de Gramont, being taken ill, requested permission to return to Paris, and begged Marie Antoinette to intercede in her favour. The young princess

immediately sought her grandfather and laid before him with much grace and sweetness the request of her lady-in-waiting. The king, embarrassed as he always was under similar circumstances, put her off. The dauphiness insisted. "Madame," replied Louis XV., rather dryly, "have I not told you that I should give you an answer?" "But, Papa," the princess cried eagerly, "aside from reasons of humanity and justice, think what grief it would be for me should a lady attached to my service die while under your displeasure." The king smiled, and promised his granddaughter to satisfy her. He immediately charged the Duc de la Vrillière to inquire into the condition of Madame de Gramont, and two days later, despite the opposition of Madame du Barry, he ordered permission to be sent to the invalid to return to Paris. La Vrillière, who was intimately connected with the favourite, sent the permission, but unwillingly. Either from ill-will or forgetfulness, he neglected to inform the dauphiness of having done so. The dauphiness sent for him. "Monsieur," she said to him in a tone full of dignity, "in dealing with a petition with which I had charged you, and which concerned a lady in my service, I should have been the first to be informed, and by you, of the decision of the king with regard to it; but I see, Monsieur, that you treat me as though I were a child, and I am very well content to tell you that I shall not forget it."

La Vrillière, confused, stammered a few poor excuses. The court was surprised at her proud language; and Madame Adélaïde, admiring a courage of which she would not have been capable, could not refrain from saying to her niece, not perhaps without a touch of envy, "'T is easy to see that you are not of our race."

Despite the divergence of ideas and difference of attitude, Mesdames themselves at that moment had fallen under her charm; and Madame Adélaïde, for an instant oblivious of her prejudices, gave Marie Antoinette a key to their apartment, so that she might go to them without her suite and without being seen. There was no one, not even excepting the dauphin, who did not succumb to the ascendancy of the young woman. His character, somewhat reserved and self-contained, began to blossom in contact with her grace and good-humour. "Since we must live together in intimate friendship," the princess said to him one day, "we should discuss everything with confidence." And their conversation began in fact to be confidential and intimate, touching upon the most delicate subjects, — upon Madame du Barry, and upon the Duc de Choiseul.

Such a triumph was indeed too brilliant to last, and the faithful Mercy, who well knew the court of Versailles and the French character, was not blind as to the results of this flattering beginning. "Without allowing myself to be dazzled by the well-deserved success of Madame the Dauphiness," he wrote on the 15th of June, 1770, "I reflect that in the midst of a gay and inconstant nation, and in an extremely stormy court, it is more easy to win favour at the start than to preserve it for any length of time." There were too many people whose interest it was to destroy this budding influence, and moreover the qualities of the young princess were too brilliant not to be dangerous. Impulsive, free from all calculation or ulterior motive, she rarely was able to hide her feelings, and this very spontaneity which was one of her charms was also one of her perils. Her ready confidence exposed her, unarmed, to the intrigues of her surroundings, as her kind heart left her without defence against solicitations and importunities. Lively, ardent, full of gayety and life, fond of pleasure, inclined to raillery, it was difficult for her to submit herself to reflection or constraint. There were, moreover, so many distractions at the court, so many social and family obligations, that there was scarce time to think of any regular instruction.

Would you like to know how Marie Antoinette employed her time during the first months of her sojourn in France? Here is a description which she gave her mother in a letter written on the 12th of July, 1770: —

"I rise at ten o'clock or at nine or at half-past nine, and having dressed myself, say my morning prayers; then I breakfast, and afterwards I go to my aunts, where I usually find the king. This lasts until half-past ten; then at eleven I have my hair dressed. At noon the chamber is announced, and every one can enter who is not a common person. I put on my rouge and wash my hands before them all; then the men retire, and the ladies remain and I dress myself before them. There is mass at noon. If the king is at Versailles, I go with him and my husband and aunts to mass; if he is not there, I go alone with Monsieur the Dauphin, but always at the same hour. After mass the two of us dine in public; but that is over at half-past one, for we both eat very fast. From there I go to the apartment of Monsieur the Dauphin, or if he is busy, I return to my own. I read, I write, or I work; for I am now working a vest for the king which does not get on very rapidly, but which I hope with the grace of God to have finished in a few years. At three o'clock I go again to my aunts, where the king also goes at that hour.

"At four the abbé comes to me; at five every day a teacher of the harpsichord or of singing, and remains until six. At half-past six I almost always go to my aunts if I do not go to walk; I must tell you that my husband almost always goes with me to my aunts. There is play from seven to nine o'clock; but when the weather is fine, I go for a walk, and then there is no play in my apartment, but in that of my aunts. At nine o'clock we sup, and when the king is not there my aunts come and sup with us; but when the king is there we go and sup with them. We wait for the king, who usually comes at a quarter to eleven; as for me, while I wait I throw myself on a large sofa and sleep until the arrival of the king; but when he is not there we go to bed at eleven."

At Choisy the day was still longer, and the play was often kept up till half-past one in the morning.

In this programme, at once so full and so empty, in this life so occupied, yet without any true occupations, where could one find time for any serious pursuits, — we will not say studies, but simply reading? Marie Antoinette hardly had time to write to her mother; she was often obliged to do it while at her toilette, and yet we know how well she loved her. If time were wanting for the accomplishment of a duty which was so imperative and so dear to her heart, how was she to find time each day for steady application, very useful, no doubt, but which should have preceded her marriage, and for which, it must be confessed, she had always very little inclination? "She has an excellent and ready understanding, which grasps and retains what she reads," Mercy wrote; "but she devotes too little time to that employment."

This was a source of great anxiety to Maria Theresa. She felt that the education of her daughter had not received sufficient attention at Vienna; and she would have been glad to have her perfect it at Versailles, also to have her find time, in the midst of the frivolous round of the court, for some solid reading as a supplement to her instruction. She returned to this point incessantly in her letters, and begged to receive an account of such reading, and even that a journal of it should be kept for her benefit. Marie Antoinette was greatly embarrassed by this demand; her natural vivacity, the petulance characteristic of her age, her repugnance to apply a mind easily distracted, her frequent visits to her aunts, her walks during the fine season, her desire to discuss the thousand objects, "interesting because of their beauty or novelty," did not always allow her to keep regularly the hour appointed for reading in the programme, already so

crowded, of the day. Not that she was always idle. Several times Mercy had occasion to praise her faithfulness to her work; and Vermond remarked that her language had improved, and that she expressed herself "easily, agreeably, and nobly on occasion and on notable subjects." But there were times when she took more interest in her first waiting-woman's little boy, or in the gambols of her little dog Mop, than in the "Lettres du Comte de Tessin," or in the "Bagatelles morales" of the Abbé Coyer. She knew not therefore what to reply to her mother. Too frank to dissemble the truth, it also cost her too much to acknowledge it. Moreover, it was not so simple a matter as it would seem to give the account which the empress demanded. The young princess, as was natural enough, did not wish to write it, or to have anything known of it; her vanity would have blushed before her husband and aunts to seem to be still in the schoolroom. Yet how was she to write it without having her letters and abstracts seen?

Whether rightly or wrongly, Marie Antoinette believed that none of her papers were safe from inspection; she was afraid of duplicate keys. Not knowing what to do, she did what most people do in a perplexing situation, — she did nothing. Despite her docility in the face of her counsellors, her submission to her mother, and her respect for and confidence in her, she did not reply to her pressing questions. The empress became vexed; she returned to the charge with a severity that bordered upon injustice, and an insistence that ended by irritating Marie Antoinette.

> "Try to furnish out your mind with a little good reading. . . . Do not neglect this resource, which is more necessary to you than to another, since you have learned neither music, nor drawing, nor dancing, nor painting, nor any pleasing accomplishment. I return, then, to your reading; and you must charge the abbé to send me every month an account of what you have finished and of what you intend to begin."

This time the lesson was too severe; it overpassed the mark. "See, Monsieur l'Abbé," she said to Vermond; "if any one saw that, it would redound greatly to my honour indeed!" And having read the passage we have just quoted, she added angrily, "Truly, she would make me pass for an animal!" Then calming herself a little, she continued: "Ah, well! I shall answer that it will be impossible for me to undertake any reading during the Carnival, but that I shall do so in Lent. Will that do?" "Yes, Madame, provided that you are in earnest."

We have given this little scene, as it serves to show Marie Antoinette's character at this period, and the nature of her relations with Maria Theresa, — incessant direction, for the most part imperiously given, from the mother; and on the part of the daughter a little impatience at this hidden surveillance and perpetual scolding; sometimes a fleeting determination to escape from it, and, what was very human, an effort to put off, perhaps with the intention of eluding, a wearisome task; but at bottom, sincere respect and genuine docility, which was only thwarted by the thousand interruptions of her day and her extreme vivacity of disposition.

But Maria Theresa was not satisfied with this promise, which seemed to her but a subterfuge. In the following letter she insists afresh: —

"I await with impatience to learn, on the return of this courier, of your reading and industry. It is permissible — above all, at your age — to amuse oneself; but to make it one's sole occupation, to do nothing that is solid or useful, to kill time between walks and visits, — in the end you will realize the emptiness of it, and will feel many regrets for not having better employed your time. I must again repeat to you that the handwriting of your letters becomes every day worse and less correct. In these ten months you should have improved. I was greatly humiliated on seeing something you had written to some ladies pass through several hands; you must practise with the abbé, or with some one else, to form a better hand, and to write more evenly."

Marie Antoinette might have answered that it would have been difficult for her to do in ten months at Versailles, in the midst of distractions without number, what they had failed to teach her in ten years at Vienna in the quiet of the schoolroom. But she was too respectful. She was, moreover, sincere in her promise to occupy herself more seriously during Lent; and she was faithful in doing so. From the month of March she sent a journal of her reading, which she pursued with more regularity. The Abbé de Vermond himself asserted that the dauphiness's ideas were becoming "more systematic and her language more connected." With her vivacity of disposition, it was difficult without doubt to avoid relapses. Sometimes Marie Antoinette's interest in her waiting-woman's boy, or a gallop on her horse or her donkey, or her walks during the summer, and the amusements of the Carnival during the winter would interrupt her studies. But it is certain — and the impartial reports of Mercy prove it — that the young

girl made a sincere effort to keep her promise to her mother. The faithful ambassador notes a change for the better in his august pupil. The conversations with the Abbé de Vermond became longer, more serious, and more instructive. Music, dancing, and embroidery alternated with her studies. Sometimes the reading lasted for several hours, the dauphiness herself reading, or else the Abbé de Vermond, while she busied herself with some handiwork, for which she ever manifested great fondness. The choice of books was of such a kind as to form her understanding, — well-written letters, sermons, historical treatises, and memoirs, sometimes plays, but never novels or other frivolous books, for which she exhibited no curiosity. They read the "Anecdotes de la Cour de Philippe-Auguste," the "Mémoires de l'Estoile," the "Lettres d'une mère à sa fille," the "Livre de Tobie," the "Petit-Carême" by Massillon, the works of Bossuet, Hume's "History of England." In short, she soon found herself more learned in history, and particularly in French history, than the princes and princesses of the royal family. She did more: from pupil, she became mentor, and had the "Mémoires de Sully" read to the dauphin.

For herself she laid out a whole plan of study, and in order to render the promise which she made to herself somewhat more binding, she made a memorandum of it.

At this time Mercy wrote of her: —

"It seems that her Royal Highness has wished to bind herself to a constant and invariable routine, and to help her to do so has written a sort of memorandum of the disposition of the hours of her day, which she has had the goodness to read to me. It says that on rising Madame l'Archiduchesse will employ the first moments in prayer, then that she will busy herself with her music, dancing, and one hour of 'sensible reading;' this is the expression used in her memorandum. Her toilette, a visit to the king, mass, and dinner will occupy the rest of the morning. In the afternoon there is an hour and a half assigned to the continuation of the sensible reading; a walk or the hunt, and conversation with Monsieur the Dauphin and with the others of the royal family, find their respective places. I have respectfully exhorted Madame the Dauphiness not to depart from so wise and well-arranged a plan. She answered with her usual good faith, 'I know not if I shall fulfil all this very exactly, but I shall hold myself to it as far as possible.'"

When one compares this programme with the one of July 12, 1770, one can judge of the progress made in two years. And, in

fact, with the exception of a little dissipation the following summer, — above all, during a journey to Compiègne, where the walks and hunting allowed of but little assiduity, — Marie Antoinette was faithful to this plan. The repugnance which she had at first manifested for serious pursuits had disappeared. From this time forth she gave herself up to them, not only without distaste, but with pleasure. During the month of November, despite the distractions of the autumn, she devoted two hours a day to them. Amid the celebrations of the marriage of the Comte d'Artois she reserved one hour for meditation. And when winter brought with it greater calm and liberty, it was not one hour but two that the dauphiness consecrated to reading and the commentaries with which the Abbé de Vermond accompanied it, and two hours more for music and dancing. "In this way," Mercy wrote, "the days are sufficiently well filled, and I think that Your Majesty has every reason to be satisfied with her."

CHAPTER V.

What must be thought of Maria Theresa's Reproofs. — The Counsellors of Marie Antoinette. — The Comte de Mercy; his Means of Information. — The Abbé de Vermond. — Marie Antoinette's Fondness for Riding. — The Influence of Mesdames. — How this Influence was gained. — The Household of the Dauphiness. — The Comtesse de Noailles. — Madame l'Étiquette. — The Comtesse de Cossé and the Comtesse de Mailly. — The Taking of the Veil by Madame Louise. — The Disadvantage of the Influence of Mesdames upon their Niece. — The Comtesse de Narbonne and the Marquise de Durfort. — The Relation of the King and Marie Antoinette. — Diminution of the Influence of Mesdames. — The Dissatisfaction of Madame Adélaïde; her Spitefulness.

THE absence of serious pursuits was the principal, but not the only reproach which Maria Theresa addressed to Marie Antoinette. Her maternal solicitude was ever on the alert, and was directed toward everything; and one is truly justified in thinking that if she had devoted half as much anxious surveillance to the education of her daughter as she exercised over her conduct at Versailles, many of the faults of which she was later the most merciless censor might have been corrected. We must not, however, always take her reproofs literally. The empress often exaggerated the evil in order more effectually to arouse the *amour-propre* of the dauphiness, and to "give her soul a shake." She herself acknowledges that she often wrote too severely in order to wake her from her "lethargy." She was exactly informed of everything that occurred at Versailles by her faithful minister, the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, — one of the most original figures, perhaps, of that epoch. Mercy, who had represented Austria at Paris for several years, knew the court of France by heart, had studied all its personages, learned thoroughly all its springs and intrigues, and, charged by his sovereign to support and direct the steps of the archduchess on that slippery

ground, fulfilled his mission to the end with a devotion, perspicuity, vigilance, and sincerity beyond all praise.

It is curious to investigate the complicated system by means of which the clever diplomat was able to follow day by day and almost hour by hour the actions of his pupil. With regard to this system he wrote as follows: —

"I am sure of three persons in the service of Madame l'Archiduchesse, — one of her waiting-women and two lackeys, who give me an exact account of all that passes in her rooms. I am informed each day of the conversations of the archduchess with the Abbé de Vermond, from whom she conceals nothing; I learn through the Marquise de Durfort the least detail of all that is said in the apartment of Mesdames, and I have a greater number of people and sources through which I hear all that takes place in the king's apartment when Madame the Dauphiness is there. To these I add my own observations, so that there is not an hour in the day when I am not prepared to give an account of what Madame l'Archiduchesse may have said or done or heard; . . . and I have pushed my researches to this extent because I knew that your Majesty's peace depended upon it."

It must be said for the honour of the ambassador that he hid nothing from the empress. He never asserted a fact without the most absolute certainty of it, nor did he ever conceal one if he were sure of it; never — for he had given his promise, and he kept it — never did he seek to tranquillize his august sovereign at the expense of the truth; he told her everything, — trivial faults as well as more serious defects.

And what is more necessary to note, he showed so much tact in the fulfilment of his delicate mission, he knew so well how to disguise the odious side of it, and to temper what might have seemed hard by a devotion above all proof and an almost paternal affection, — that Marie Antoinette, watched, spied upon, if you will, scolded by him respectfully but mercilessly, never was angry with him for it; she did not always follow his counsels, but she never lost her temper with him, nor was her confidence in him ever shaken. "'T is most fortunate," Mercy wrote, "that Madame the Dauphiness honours us, the abbé and me, with her confidence, and that she shows us greater kindness, inasmuch as we tell her the truth without circumlocution and without flattery." This acknowledgment under such difficult circumstances does as much honour to the pupil as to the mentor.

The assistant of Mercy in this delicate mission was, as we have already seen, the Abbé de Vermond, who, from being the precep-

tor of the archduchess of Austria, had become reader to the dauphiness of France, " in order to continue the functions he had discharged at Vienna, of guiding and perfecting the accomplishments which Madame the Dauphiness manifested so great a desire to cultivate." Despite many vexations and a few periods of discouragement, he remained steadfast to the task confided to him. His eyes, he has himself said, were ever open, alternately because of disquietude or delight. The jealousies of his rivals and court spites have calumniated him. Madame Campan has represented him as Marie Antoinette's evil genius, — as an intriguing, domineering, and ambitious man. History to-day, being better informed, has rehabilitated the Abbé de Vermond, and restored to him his true character. If we are justified in accusing him of not always being disinterested, — and yet the abbacies which he demanded, according to the usages of that epoch, represented but a mediocre revenue for a man obliged to live at court, and whose emoluments were not paid with any regularity, — if we must regret that his guidance was not always very enlightened, we must recognize in him a zealous and intelligent collaborator of the Comte de Mercy in the work of protection and preservation which Maria Theresa had confided to him; an acute observer, a devoted servitor of Marie Antoinette, — the only one of her household, according to the ambassador, who did her real service, by " telling her the truth, and making her feel it."

Thanks to this double supervision, so well guarded by a double affection, Maria Theresa could at Vienna follow all the actions of her daughter. She followed her at Versailles, at Fontainebleau, at Compiègne; she followed her to the ball, to the hunt, to her apartment. As soon as any difficulty was sighted, a letter was immediately despatched from Schoenbrunn or from Laxemburg, — a letter of reprimand or of counsel. If she saw that the dauphiness was growing negligent in her bearing, or that her figure was being spoiled, she wrote to her to wear stays; and after some reluctance Marie Antoinette submitted to do so. But she was not always so docile; and a new influence was about to combat and sometimes to triumph over that of her mother.

Soon after her arrival in France the archduchess expressed a desire to ride. The empress was frightened; at fifteen, while still growing, it seemed to her that it would be a risk which might entail dangerous consequences for the future. She appealed to Choiseul; and the king, forewarned by his minister, did not give

the permission which the dauphiness solicited; he only allowed her to mount a donkey. A very gentle one was chosen, and this new amusement gave great pleasure to the young princess. But soon the donkey ceased to satisfy her; she had so many good reasons to prefer a nobler mount. Her aunts encouraged her; the king and the dauphin, who loved to hunt, would have been delighted to have her accompany them; they were at Fontainebleau; the occasion was propitious. Madame Adélaïde undertook to overcome the difficulties and obtain the king's permission. A horse was secretly conveyed with the donkey to a place agreed upon in the forest; and when the dauphiness arrived she sent away the donkey and jumped upon the horse. She was very proud of, but also somewhat embarrassed by, her small victory. What should she say to Mercy's objections? How escape her mother's reproaches? She compromised by promising never to follow the hunt; but the opportunity, the pleasure, a crowd of excuses, good or bad, tempted her often to break this pledge. Maria Theresa returned more than once to this delicate subject; finding it impossible to overcome her daughter's strong inclination for this diversion, she resigned herself to cautioning her to be careful, which advice was usually followed.

It was Mesdames, as we have just seen, who counselled the dauphiness to try this new species of recreation, and who tempted her for the first time to disobey her mother. Their influence at that moment was preponderant, and Maria Theresa was justly alarmed at it. When her daughter had set out for France, she had felt obliged to say to her: "Love your aunts; those princesses have many virtues and talents; it is fortunate for you. I hope that you will deserve their friendship." What other guidance indeed could she recommend in the royal family? The dauphin was too young and inexperienced himself to direct the youth and inexperience of his wife.

As for the king, he had never asserted any authority over his children. He had never been able to bring himself to govern them, to advise them, or to correct them in any way whatsoever. He loved his family, but with that selfish affection which does not wish to give or take trouble. Provided that he was not interfered with in his pleasures, he allowed others every liberty in their amusements.

There was of course Mercy, who had the entire confidence of the empress, and who deserved it. "See Mercy often," Maria

Theresa repeated to her daughter incessantly. "Follow all the counsels he gives you." "Mercy is charged to speak plainly to you." And by the side of Mercy was Vermond. But Vermond occupied only a subordinate position; and Mercy, being a foreign minister, and consequently looked upon with suspicion at the court of France, was bound to an extreme reserve, and could have audience only once or twice a week. In any case, neither of them could be *society* for the young princess.

If from the royal family we turn to the household of the dauphiness, we find in the first place her lady of honour, the Comtesse de Noailles, "Madame l'Étiquette," as Marie Antoinette called her in jest. She was a woman of irreproachable conduct, but possessed of a seriousness that was somewhat heavy, and of a mind somewhat limited, joining to a stiff bearing and an austere manner little tricks of flattery which the keen wit of her young mistress could not fail to detect. The exaggerated importance which she attached to wearisome regulations, many of which had a reason for existing, but others of which were childish and whose use, moreover, she did not explain, exasperated the dauphiness, while her obsequious complaisance irritated her. Despite these disadvantages Madame de Noailles was perhaps the one woman at the court who was well suited to her high office. The exalted position of her family had prepared her for it, and her own incontestable virtue rendered her worthy of it. Mercy made use of her more than once to counteract the all-powerful influence of Mesdames.

Next to her came the lady of the bedchamber, the Duchesse de Cossé, daughter of the Duc de Nivernais, — a reserved young woman with abundance of discretion, who added to the charm of a clear understanding great tact, and of whom the emperor one day declared that in her head an English mind was found side by side with a French imagination; she was, moreover, sincerely devoted and sincerely beloved, and when later the illness of her son forced her to resign her office, she left to the queen, under the title of a "testament of fidelity," some excellent advice concerning the intrigues of the court and the traps which were spread for her.

Among the other ladies of the dauphiness's household some were gentle and intelligent, like the Marquise de Mailly, a perfectly good woman, though heedless; but while these were in every way irreproachable, they offered no kind of support.

Others, like Madame de Chimay, though of undoubted virtue, failed to inspire confidence either in the ambassador or the princess; and others again no longer possessed a spotless reputation, — as, for example, the Duchesse de Chaulnes, witty but bad, who crowned a series of adventures and extravagances by an absurd marriage.

Considering all things, and especially the situation of affairs we have just described, it was but natural that Marie Antoinette should draw near to her aunts, and that her mother should encourage her to do so. Mercy himself, who knew the court so well, recognized the advantages of this intimacy, but he soon added that she should not give herself up to it without a certain amount of circumspection. What seems most surprising to us at first is that Mesdames, with their prejudices against the Austrian alliance, should have lent themselves so readily to the intimacy. Did they think that they were fulfilling a duty toward their young niece, cast without pilot or rudder upon the stormy sea of Versailles? Or did they too yield to the power of that grace which held every one as by a charm? Or was it calculation on their part; and, jealous of the new influence that had appeared on the horizon of the court, did they embrace their rival in order the better to strangle her? We would not like to swear that this consideration was wholly absent from the motives which guided, if not the three sisters, — we would gladly make exception of the worthy Madame Victoire, — at least Madame Adélaïde, the politician of the family, and the recognized head of that august trinity which reigned in the private apartments of the château.

The arrival of the dauphiness upset all their projects and forced them again into a secondary position. After the death of Marie Josèphe of Saxe, Mesdames held after their father the highest rank at court: the king's play was held in their apartment. In the future this function would belong to the dauphiness. That Madame Adélaïde should look upon this change with displeasure seems scarcely doubtful. From that to hiding her displeasure beneath an amiable exterior, and seeking to destroy an influence against which she might have found it difficult to struggle, by dominating and absorbing it, was a natural transition, a plan which would tempt the scheming mind of the daughter of Louis XV.

Whatever may have been the reason, the intimacy between the niece and aunts was established from the beginning. Charmed

by their advances, and feeling the necessity of support, the young princess yielded to it with that spontaneity and frankness which was the basis and attraction of her character.

A touching ceremonial which soon occurred served in a way as a further bond of union. On the 10th of October, 1770, after the five months of waiting insisted upon by her father, Madame Louise took the veil of the Carmelites of St. Denys, and it was from the hands of the dauphiness that she received it. Despite the reluctance of the humble sister the ceremony was one of great splendour. The Papal Nuncio was present, and twenty-two bishops assisted; and the daughter of France for that one day resumed the costume and following of a powerful princess. But when after the usual question, she reappeared in the choir, deprived of her rich array and clad in a coarse habit, to kneel at the feet of her niece, all eyes were wet, and the dauphiness herself watered with her tears the scapular and cloak with which she invested the humble postulant.

Both Mesdames and the king felt that they had not sufficient fortitude to be present at this great sacrifice; it would have cut them to the heart, so says a letter from a Carmelite; they gathered eagerly, however, every echo of it from the lips of their niece; and it would seem that the friendship of Marie Antoinette and her aunts was strengthened by this noble example and noble lesson.

The effects of their influence were soon apparent. Mesdames were timid even with their father; they cared not for the world; they were fearful of appearing in public; they lived in a small circle of intimates which too often transformed itself into a small circle of intriguers, before whom they allowed themselves to make remarks which were, to say the least, indiscreet, and criticisms which were malicious. The dauphiness fell into the way of joining in their discourse. Under their encouragement her natural turn for satire was given full play, under the impression that it would be confined within the narrow boundaries of a limited circle; and her witty sayings, which were of course immediately repeated throughout the court and wickedly added to, hurt those against whom they were directed, and vexed the king. It is even asserted that she ridiculed the eccentricities of certain persons to their faces.

Then on a sudden the young princess became timid, like her aunts, brusque, shy, notwithstanding the success she had enjoyed

in the world. She no longer spoke to personages of distinction; she dared not address the king; she no longer held the play in her apartment; she withdrew as much as possible from her duties of receiving, or when she was obliged to fulfil them she was frightfully agitated.

One day, it was on the 4th of September, 1770, the *corps de ville* of Paris and the States of Languedoc were to be presented to the dauphiness, the first by the Duc de Chevreuse, governor of Paris, and the second by the Comte d'Eu, governor of the province. Mesdames, who were always awkward in their bearing whenever they had to appear in public, tried to persuade their niece to receive the addresses without replying to them, saying that they never did otherwise. Fortunately Mercy heard of it. He combated energetically the counsels of Mesdames. Marie Antoinette listened to him: she responded to the *corps de ville* and to the States with much grace; the deputation and the public were enchanted with her.

But the faithful ambassador was not always there to fight against the preponderating influence of the aunts. It was difficult for him in his bi-weekly visits to correct the bad impression produced by daily conversation and example. The insinuations of the old princesses, falling incessantly on the mind of the young girl, ended by making an impression upon it, however strong the protest of her own good sense, as the constant dropping of water finishes by wearing away even the hardest rock. This deplorable ascendancy extended itself over everything, mingled with everything, touched everything. "Mesdames are not content to govern the dauphiness in all that relates to her personally," Mercy wrote; "they also wish to extend their power over those persons attached to the service of her Royal Highness, to strike a blow at their prerogatives, to confound their ranks and thus lessen the very marked difference which should exist between the condition of the dauphiness and that of Mesdames of France." To confound the condition of the dauphiness and that of Mesdames of France, such was indeed at bottom the aim of the daughters of Louis XV.

Despite everything, Marie Antoinette, led on by her want of calculation and need of expansion, which was one of the characteristics of her disposition, could not hide from her aunts either her joys or her hopes. One day, having received from the dauphin a promise of intimacy which she had long expected and ardently hoped for, she could not keep her happiness to herself,

but ran to acquaint Madame Adélaïde and Madame Sophie with it. They, being gossips, like all old maids, were not discreet enough to respect the confidence of the young wife; they recounted it to so many persons that it became the news of the day. The dauphin, shy and displeased, failed to keep his engagement, and there was a coolness for some days in the household.

Behind Madame Adélaïde and directing her was her lady of the bedchamber, the Comtesse de Narbonne, a woman of small parts, according to Mercy, but well versed in intrigue, at a court where talent was not so necessary as cunning in order to succeed, and who had been able to gain great ascendancy over her mistress. Madame de Narbonne neglected nothing in order to attract the dauphiness and to obtain the same influence over her that she had over Madame Adélaïde. Either from indolence of mind or need of amusement and the facility of procuring it with the lady of the bedchamber, Marie Antoinette ended by submitting to her influence. We soon see a singular instance of this.

When the archduchess left Vienna, her mother counselled her to obtain, as a special favour, for the Marquis de Durfort, who had negotiated her marriage, the title of duke. Several times in her letters to her daughter or in her correspondence with Mercy Maria Theresa, who had a talent for being grateful, returned to the subject, surprised that a favour so often granted to persons of much less merit than the Marquis de Durfort should be so long deferred. And yet it was to Marie Antoinette's interest to prove that she was willing to aid those who had served her, and that she had sufficient power to aid them effectually. But at every mention of the subject the young princess put off the question: it was necessary to wait, the opportunity was not favourable, etc. She had indeed spoken of it to Choiseul, but she dared not broach it to the king. The truth was that Madame Adélaïde opposed having the Marquis de Durfort created duke because the glory of that title would in a manner redound to the credit of her younger sister, Madame Victoire, whose lady of the bedchamber was the Marquise de Durfort. This was also at the time when Mesdames Adélaïde and Sophie were seeking to estrange the dauphiness from their sister, whose affectionate and more gentle nature threw them into the shade.

Then there was a sudden change through one of those shiftings of scenes, or rather by one of those compromises, which we often see at court, but which are not entirely peculiar, so far as we know,

to a monarchical form of government. The bishop of Gap, brother-in-law of the Comtesse de Narbonne, ardently desired to be made grand almoner to Madame Victoire; the Marquise de Durfort, who had as great ascendancy over her as the Comtesse de Narbonne over Madame Adélaïde, persuaded her to refuse the nomination to the bishop so long as she herself had not received satisfaction. Madame Victoire yielded to her representations, and the two ladies of the bedchamber found themselves in the position of being mutually in need of each other. They capitulated, owing to the efforts of their common friends; and it was agreed that the Comtesse de Narbonne should get Madame Adélaïde to speak to the dauphiness in behalf of the Marquis de Durfort, and that the latter should induce Madame Victoire to accept the bishop of Gap as grand almoner. This agreement was religiously observed; and the first result of it was that the bishop of Gap was called for and made grand almoner to Mesdames Victoire and Sophie. Immediately afterward Madame Adélaïde having announced her consent that the dauphiness should use her good offices in favour of the Marquis de Durfort, her Royal Highness undertook the mission and spoke to the king concerning it on the 6th of that month. The king received the dauphiness's petition graciously, and answered without the slightest hesitation that the request being a legitimate one, and the dauphiness desiring it, he gladly granted it; he then commanded the Duc de la Vrillière to send to the Marquis de Durfort an assurance in writing by means of which both he and his posterity should enjoy the dignity of duke and peer on the extinction, soon to take place, of the branch of Lorge; this satisfied the demand of the Marquis de Durfort.

Louis XV. sincerely loved the dauphiness; her good-humour, grace, even her petulance, though sometimes audacious, pleased him. On several occasions his tenderness for her had been marked. One day, while out hunting, he got into her carriage and placed her affectionately upon his knee.

Another time, at Fontainebleau, he went to her apartment in the morning in his dressing-gown, entering by a door hitherto locked, drank his coffee there and remained two hours, and seemed gayer and happier than usual. Tired of everything, sick of his culpable pleasures, it seemed as if he sought in that purer atmosphere a refuge from himself; and it would have been easy for Marie Antoinette to accustom her grandfather to come regularly

to her apartment, and to have thus gained an enduring dominion over that mind so easy to conquer by reason of its lassitude. It would only have been necessary for her to be herself and to yield to her first impulse.

Unfortunately Mesdames set themselves to work to inspire her with the same fear and taciturnity that they experienced in the presence of their father. Under their malign influence the young girl found herself embarrassed when with the king, and in her embarrassment remained silent. When she had a favour to ask, she preferred to write; and Louis XV., who would not have dared refuse when brought face to face, being himself timid before his children, denied by letter what he would have granted to an oral request. Finding that she did not respond to his overtures, he ended by feeling hurt; he said nothing, because he was too indolent, but he vented his displeasure in fits of sullenness and coldness. Nor did matters improve. Mercy in vain represented to the dauphiness how easy it would be for her to profit by the friendly inclinations of her grandfather, who would like nothing better than to devote himself to his children provided that they on their part would try to lessen his ennui. The dauphiness admitted it, but concluded by saying that she lacked the courage to talk to the king. "I have believed it my duty to omit nothing," Mercy wrote in reporting this conversation to the empress, "to the end that your Majesty might see to what degree the counsels of Madame Adélaïde have enervated the dauphiness."

Maria Theresa became alarmed at this persistent influence which had such fatal results for her daughter, and interfered with her own plans both as mother and sovereign.

"Every letter informs me," she wrote, "that you are governed entirely by your aunts. I esteem them, I love them; but they have never known how to make themselves either esteemed or loved by their family or the public, and you wish to follow in their footsteps!"

And then proudly drawing a parallel between what Mesdames were and what she was, she continued: —

"Do my counsels, my affection, deserve a smaller return than theirs? I acknowledge that this thought cuts me to the heart. Compare the part, the approbation, that they have received from the world and — I am loath to say it — the rôle that I have played. You should then give me the preference if I prophesy or counsel differently from them. I do not wish to compare myself in any way with these estimable princesses, whose dis-

positions and good qualities I admire; but I must ever repeat that they have not been able to gain the esteem of the public nor the love of individuals. By reason of their easy nature and the habit of being ruled by some one else, they have made themselves disliked, disagreeable, and wearisome, and the object of vexatious intrigues. I see you following the same course, and must say nothing! I love you too well to be able or willing to do so, and your affected silence on this point has distressed me and gives me little hope that you will change!"

There came a change, however. Little by little Marie Antoinette, enlightened by Mercy's warnings and her mother's scolding, came to value the counsels of her aunts more justly. She did not break with them at once; she could not brusquely sunder the ties which her age and her loneliness had led her to form, and which daily intercourse had strengthened. But her confidence in them was gone.

Out of respect and habit she still paid some heed to the advice of her former counsellors; but from the middle of 1772 it is easy to perceive that the old princesses' influence was on the wane. If Marie Antoinette yielded to them now and then, it was rather from good-nature or fear than from conviction.

Three months later Mercy acknowledges that they are no longer consulted about anything, not even regarding the minor arrangements of the day, of which formerly they were the arbiters. At the beginning of 1773 the relation of the dauphiness to her aunts is what it should be, — a simple observance of civilities; she showed them the proper and fitting consideration, but she was no longer intimate with them. The sway of Mesdames was past.

The old princesses did not bear cheerfully the loss of the small despotism which they had exercised over their niece and through her over the rest of the family. They manifested their displeasure in criticisms, cavilling, and sharp speeches, and in seeking to exalt, to the detriment of Marie Antoinette, their new sister-in-law, the Comtesse de Provence; they were unsuccessful. Then, changing their tactics, they tried to ally themselves once more to Marie Antoinette; they made overtures to her, were obliging where they had before been dictatorial, and even besought the interposition of the Abbé de Vermond. Balked in these efforts and kept at a distance by the conduct, wisely unmoved, of the dauphiness, they finished, after some moments of anger and a few sharp contests in which they did not come off best, by re-

signing themselves to the incontestable supremacy of their niece; but they chafed under it, and their concentrated hate, constantly escaping, like a stream of poisonous mist, in cutting remarks and malicious insinuations, became a formidable danger to the daughter of Maria Theresa. Their hands, unskilled in any great matter, but deft at petty intrigues, had a share in the weaving of every plot contrived against the young princess. Being no longer able to rule the dauphiness, they resolved to destroy the queen, and unfortunately succeeded. Their influence had been pernicious; their spite was fatal. To cite only one instance, it was Madame Adélaïde who inflicted the nickname of the "Austrian" on her niece, the unpopularity of which weighed on Marie Antoinette during her whole life, and after having brought her to the scaffold, rested upon her memory until history, better understood, meted out justice to the malice of old maids and the pamphlets of gazetteers.

CHAPTER VI.

DISGRACE OF THE DUC DE CHOISEUL; HIS TRIUMPHANT EXILE; HIS CHARACTER. — FALL OF THE PARLIAMENTS. — DISCONTENT OF THE PEOPLE. — THE DUC D'AIGUILLON. — THE COMTESSE DU BARRY. — THE PROUD ATTITUDE OF THE DAUPHINESS TOWARD THE FAVOURITE. — THE KING IS DISPLEASED BY IT. — REMONSTRANCES FROM MARIA THERESA. — LETTER FROM KAUNITZ TO MERCY. — DIRECT INTERVENTION OF LOUIS XV. — INSISTENCE ON THE PART OF THE EMPRESS. — LIVELY LETTERS EXCHANGED BETWEEN MOTHER AND DAUGHTER. — MADAME DU BARRY SEEKS TO PROPITIATE THE DAUPHINESS; SHE FAILS. — IN THIS CONFLICT, HISTORY SHOWS MARIE ANTOINETTE TO HAVE BEEN IN THE RIGHT.

ON the the 24th of December, 1770, the Duc de Choiseul, prime minister of France, if not in title, at least in fact, received from the king the following note: —

I order my cousin, the Duc de Choiseul, to place his dismission from the office of Secretary of State and Superintendent of the Post, in the hands of the Duc de la Vrillière, and to withdraw to Chanteloup until further orders from me. LOUIS.

VERSAILLES, this 24th day of December, 1770.

The duke learned of his disgrace with imperturbable coolness. He set out immediately for Paris, where he found the duchess, who had just seated herself at table. On seeing him enter, she said to him: "You have indeed the air of a man in exile; but sit down; our dinner will be none the less good." They dined in fact very tranquilly; and on the following day the Duc de Choiseul with his wife and his sister, the Duchesse de Gramont, departed for his estate in Touraine. A contemporary writes: "The people of Paris lined the streets from his palace to the D'Enfer boundary, overwhelming him with laudatory acclamations, which made such an impression on this minister, who had never been popular, that he exclaimed with tears in his eyes, 'This is something that I have not deserved.'"

His departure from Paris and from Versailles had been an ovation; his sojourn at Chanteloup was a triumph. Both the court and the city, as it was then said, betook itself thither; there was hardly a great noble, a fashionable woman, or a man in office, who did not feel bound in honour to go to pay their respects to the exile, and the king, who at bottom perhaps missed his minister, shut his eyes to this striking protest, which was ill disguised under the pretence of paying homage to misfortune.

Of a volatile mind, but broad and perspicacious, an inconsistent politician, but possessed of large views, witty, elegant, magnificent to prodigality, confident to presumption, bold to audacity, proud to haughtiness, a generous enemy, a devoted friend, regarded with favour by women, feared by diplomats, holding high the honour of France, the Duc de Choiseul possessed great qualities and great defects, and perhaps it would be but true to say that he was more loved because of his defects than his qualities. Some one has written of him that he elevated "indiscretion into frankness, insolence to dignity, frivolity to independence." However unfortunate certain acts of his administration may have been, it is none the less certain that, in the midst of the enervated society of the reign of Louis XV., Choiseul was a character, and that he displayed under various circumstances genuine talent as a statesman. In the full swing of the eighteenth century, at a time when the general opinion was one of praise for Frederick II., his foresight discerned the menace of that Prussian power which was still so young and yet so insidious; and he found in the alliance with Austria the means to check its encroachments, the danger of which the future has but too plainly proved to us.

He had gained such an ascendancy over foreign courts, especially over that of Spain, that he said himself he was more sure of his power in the cabinet at Madrid than in the one at Versailles. But his very haughtiness left him without defence against the intrigues that were hatched against him. "One never saw him," so writes a contemporary, "stoop to vile court intrigues, nor to manage and flatter the valets." He despised his enemies from pride, and spared them from generosity. It was this that ruined him. His pride refused to bow the knee before the idol of the day, Madame du Barry. There resulted from this at first "petty dislikes, grimaces, sarcasms, shrugging of shoulders, and finally the petty vengeance of a schoolgirl."

Choiseul laughed at this, and his friends laughed with him. His position seemed secure; the king esteemed and loved him. "You manage my affairs very well; I am content with you," he had written to him. The marriage of the dauphin and the arrival of Marie Antoinette in France had served to strengthen the influence of the minister. The favourite herself had no personal animosity against him. "She does not hate you in the least," Louis XV. added; "she recognizes your intelligence, and wishes you no ill." This letter from the royal lover, obviously dictated by his mistress, shows beyond doubt on her part a desire for a reconciliation. Choiseul, always haughty, repelled her advances; he contented himself with replying that he would grant all demands of Madame du Barry which he thought just.

But he could not prevent those about him, nor refrain himself, from indulging in open and witty pleasantry on the subject of the favourite. He even ventured to make some bold remarks about her to the king.

The king was hurt: he gave ear to the enemies of the minister. They represented that Choiseul was in league with the Parliaments, then struggling against the chancellor, and was seeking his own advantage in entangling France in a war between England and Spain. The Prince de Condé and Maupeou joined in the plot, and Madame du Barry threw the overpowering weight of her influence into the scales against him.

Louis XV. yielded, and sent to the minister by the Duc de la Vrillière the note which we have quoted above. Choiseul departed: one mistress had raised him up; another overthrew him.

Externally his fall changed nothing. Although he was the most determined upholder of the Austrian alliance among the members of the cabinet at Versailles, the king was not less in favour of it than he. According to the Comte de Broglie it was his favourite scheme, and he would not hear of abandoning it. But in reality his fall meant the triumph of the party opposed to Marie Antoinette. Maria Theresa, who had no fears for the alliance, was extremely uneasy for her daughter. Might they not try to remove from her her faithful counsellors, Mercy and Vermond? Might not the young princess, with her vivacity, which was little inclined to reflection, express too openly her sympathies with the fallen minister? Or, on the other hand, left to herself and lacking discretion, would she not be spoiled by that "abominable set"? These fears of the empress were vain; guided by

Mercy, the young dauphiness behaved irreproachably in that delicate crisis; but the danger was none the less real.

The fall of the Parliament soon followed that of Choiseul. During the night of the 20th and 21st of January, 1771, one hundred and sixty presidents or councillors were exiled; on the 14th of April a bed of justice, solemnly held at Versailles, suppressed Parliament and replaced it by a new assembly composed for the most part of members of the Great Council. There was a great uproar in the whole kingdom; at Paris as at Versailles, every one openly took the part of the exiles; the princes of the blood, with the exception of the Comte de la Marche, refused to assist at the bed of justice. Even the women took part in it; and the public disregarded all bounds in its remarks. At the court the intrigues and the excitement were not less general. "It is impossible for your Majesty to form any exact idea of the horrible confusion that reigns here," Mercy wrote to Maria Theresa. "The throne is disgraced by the indecency and growing credit of the favourite and the wickedness of her partisans. The nation gives forth seditious speech and incendiary writings in which the person of the monarch is by no means spared. Versailles has become the abode of perfidy, hate, and vengeance; everything is done by intrigue and personal interest; and it would seem as though every one had renounced all sentiment of honour."

Choiseul was overthrown; and he was not replaced. The chiefs of the opposite party were divided upon the choice of his successor. The favourite desired the Duc d'Aiguillon; the Prince de Condé was opposed to him; the chancellor was indifferent; and the king hesitated. D'Aiguillon had made himself conspicuous by his long and violent contests with the Parliament of Bretagne, in which he had not come off with his reputation for honesty and valour intact. This was calumny, but it spread none the less, and brought the protégé of Madame du Barry into discredit. Louis XV. did not esteem him, and even felt for him a certain repugnance. "How can you imagine that he can replace you?" the king had written to Choiseul, the year before. "Hated as he is, what could he do?" Yet the will of the favourite again triumphed over that of the king, and on the 5th of June, 1771, the Duc d'Aiguillon was nominated.

The absolute power of Madame du Barry was thus evident to all eyes; and this open alliance between the prime minister and

the mistress became for Marie Antoinette the chief obstacle in her path over the slippery ground of the court of Versailles.

This Comtesse du Barry was not at bottom, however, a bad-hearted woman. She was not vindictive, but she was vain, and all the more eager for consideration and honour in that she felt she did not deserve them. She had wished to be presented, and she had been by some women of the best society; she had wished to sup with the dauphiness on her arrival, and her royal lover had had the cowardly weakness to permit her to sup with the dauphiness on the very eve of her marriage. From the moment she set foot in France Marie Antoinette had had before her, or rather beside her, this " stupid and impertinent creature." She had found her at La Muette, and again at Marly, Choisy, Compiègne, Versailles, — everywhere. Her virginal purity revolted against this impure contact, and she could not bring herself to show the countess any mark of favour, or even to speak to her. The dauphin shared her repugnance, and did not hide it. For a while they sought to lure him to the little suppers at St. Hubert or at the Hermitage; he had soon, however, withdrawn from them, and on the advice of his wife. The favourite was vexed at this attitude of the young couple; and her friends, having no further hope of the dauphiness, tried to destroy her credit by malicious insinuations, cutting criticisms, and clever lies. The king himself, under the instigations of his mistress, became angry; but as he had a horror of all explanations with his children, he sent for the Comtesse de Noailles, and while doing justice to the character and grace of his granddaughter, complained that " the dauphiness permitted herself to speak too freely concerning what she saw or thought she saw; " and added that her rather hazardous remarks might excite bad blood within the family circle.

This time Marie Antoinette was able to conquer her habitual timidity: she went to talk to her grandfather; and Louis XV., who dared not resist an appeal made in person or make any direct remonstrance, knew not how to maintain his displeasure. He assured his granddaughter that he found her charming, that he loved her with all his heart; he kissed her hand, embraced her, and commended all that she had said to him. For this time the danger was dissipated, the cabal foiled; and it would seem certain that if the young princess had triumphed over her embarrassment and adopted the course of carrying affairs each

time before the king himself, she would soon have done with all annoyances.

But it was at this very time that Mesdames, in order the better to influence their niece, were making strenuous efforts to estrange her from their father; and this attitude, while alienating the old monarch, left the field free for all intrigues. Madame du Barry and the Duc d'Aiguillon joined forces in their spite; and the king, caught between his minister and his mistress, — between the petty complaints respectfully submitted by the one and the bitter complaints of the other, — gave ear to their accusations. New insinuations were constantly made against the dauphiness, new assaults to shake her position. The Comtesse de Provence had just arrived at court; the cabal surrounded her with attentions, and sought to make her growing credit a means of checkmating that of her sister-in-law. Savoy against Austria, — therein lay a personal danger for Marie Antoinette; therein lay also political peril. Maria Theresa was alarmed; and at her instigation, the Prince von Kaunitz wrote to Mercy a letter which the ambassador was authorized, or rather commanded, to lay before the young princess.

"To be lacking in consideration for persons whom the king has honoured with office or with his society is to be lacking in consideration for himself. It would be still worse to permit oneself to make offensive remarks. One should regard that sort of person only from the point of view of an individual whom the king has found worthy of his confidence and favour, and one should not allow oneself to examine whether it be right or wrong; the choice alone of the prince should be respected; in consequence of this and out of respect for him, one should show consideration to that sort of person. Prudence demands that one should show it towards them because they can do harm."

And the old diplomat finished by making a plan and almost by dictating the terms of the discourse which "Madame l'Archiduchesse" should hold with the king.

But Kaunitz had to contend against both the influence of Mesdames and the repugnance of the dauphiness. His counsel was not followed, and the intrigues continued. One day, on July 28, 1771, at a supper given by the Comtesse de Valentinois, the Duc d'Aiguillon took the Comte de Mercy aside and informed him that the king desired to speak with him on the day following the morrow at the house of his mistress. "You know," the prince had said to his minister, "that I am not lodged here in such a

way as to be able to see him at my ease. Therefore engage him to meet me at Madame du Barry's." Although somewhat surprised at this overture, which he thought but a pretext to get him to the house of the favourite, Mercy was careful not to miss the appointment on the 30th. He first encountered the countess, who, with many protestations of friendship, confided to him a cause for grievance, which she protested afflicted her deeply. Some one had had recourse to the most infamous calumnies to ruin her in the opinion of Madame la Dauphine; they had even gone so far as to ascribe to her certain very disrespectful remarks. Far from being guilty of any such enormity, she had always been one of those who sang the merited praises of Madame l'Archiduchesse, and had never used her credit with the king but to persuade him to grant the reasonable demands of the dauphiness; and yet the princess always treated her with a sort of contempt. Mercy, somewhat annoyed at these declarations, was professing ignorance, and treating as exaggerations these complaints of the countess, when Louis XV. himself arrived by a secret staircase. "Until now," he said, "you have been the ambassador of the empress; I now beg you to be my ambassador, at least for a time." Then in detail, but not without a certain embarrassment, he related his grievances against the dauphiness. He found her charming; but being young and lively, and having a husband who was not able to guide her, it was impossible for her to escape the traps that were set for her: she espoused the prejudices and enmities which were suggested to her; she ill-treated, even to affectation, persons whom he admitted to his intimate circle. Such conduct would occasion scenes at court and excite party spirit and intrigue. "Go to see the dauphiness often," continued the king; "I authorize you to say to her whatever you wish as coming from me. She has bad counsellors; she need not follow their advice." And when Mercy observed that these remonstrances coming from the king himself would have greater weight with his granddaughter, who would certainly show an affectionate eagerness to obey him, the prince alleged his repugnance to having explanations with his children, and begged the ambassador to undertake this mission. "You see what confidence I have in you," he added, "since I lay bare before you my thoughts concerning my family affairs."

A strange and instructive picture! What is one to think of that

old monarch who had the regrettable courage to make himself the instrument of the caprices and spites of his mistress before his children, yet who did not dare avow it to them, and fell back upon the good-nature of a foreign minister to make known his wishes to his family?

However, Mercy was too devoted to the dauphiness, and saw too clearly the intrigue which was being woven about her, not to warn her of it at once. He sought her on the 31st, recounted to her the scene of the preceding day, and insisted upon the necessity of promptly deciding upon her course of action.

"If Madame l'Archiduchesse wishes to show openly by her conduct that she knows what rôle the Comtesse du Barry plays at court, her dignity requires that she should request the king to forbid the woman from appearing for the future in the court circle. If, on the contrary, she wishes to ignore the true position of the favourite, which is what Kaunitz advises, it is necessary to treat her unaffectedly like any other lady who has been presented, and when occasion offers to speak to her, even if it be but once, which would put an end to all specious pretexts for complaints. It is not less urgent to speak to the king, and to complain gently of his having transmitted his wishes to his granddaughter by means of a third person, instead of communicating them to her himself. Such a step would certainly embarrass the prince; and in order to avoid a similar dilemma in the future, he would be less ready to lend himself to the suggestions of the party in power. Moreover, it would be wise to consult the dauphin on this subject, but under no circumstances to follow the advice of Mesdames."

There was great commotion in the little circle of the dauphiness at this news: the dauphin approved of Mercy's advice, but Mesdames protested; and Marie Antoinette, who at that time blindly obeyed her aunts, despite the ambassador, and who, moreover, felt an extreme repugnance to the step which was required of her, — Marie Antoinette did what most people do in embarrassing situations: she adopted but part of the plan proposed to her; she consented to speak a word to Madame du Barry, but she obstinately refused to speak to the king. "My aunts," said she, "do not wish it."

The favourite was to come to court on August 11; it was decided that when they had finished at cards the ambassador should enter into conversation with her; the dauphiness should approach and casually address a word to the countess. On the day appointed everything seemed destined to pass off as had been agreed upon. The young princess was somewhat fright-

ened, but determined. All went well at the beginning. After the games Mercy addressed Madame du Barry, and the dauphiness began to make the round of the circle. She was just approaching the favourite when Madame Adélaïde, who had not lost sight of her, raised her voice and said, "It is time for us to retire. Come; let us go and wait for the king in my sister Victoire's apartment." At this the dauphiness lost courage; she withdrew, confused, and the plan failed. The favourite was hurt; Louis XV. was displeased; impatient to know what reception his mistress had met with, he came to inquire on leaving the council of state. "Well, Monsieur de Mercy," he said to the ambassador, "your scheme has not borne fruit; I must come to your aid."

The ambassador was frightened at the evident ill-humour of the king; he feared lest his resentment might lead him to some step disadvantageous to his children, and to prevent any outbreak he made a pressing appeal to the supreme authority, — to Maria Theresa. The empress, who until then had never broached this delicate subject in her correspondence with her daughter, broke forth into severe reproaches: —

"Confess that your embarrassment, your fear to say even good-day, or a word about a dress, or any other trifle, is nothing but affectation, pure affectation, or worse. You have allowed yourself to fall into such bondage that neither your reason nor your duty is strong enough to guide you. I cannot keep silent longer; after your conversation with Mercy, and all that he told you the king desired, and which it was your duty to fulfil, that you should have dared to fail him! What good reason have you to give? None. You should not regard the Du Barry in any other light than as a lady admitted to the court and to the society of the king. You are his first subject; you owe him obedience and submission; you owe an example to the court, to the courtiers, who should execute the wishes of their master. If indignities or familiarities were exacted from you, neither I nor any one else would counsel you to grant them; but an indifferent word, a little consideration, not for the lady, but for your grandfather, your master, your benefactor! And yet you fail him on the first occasion that offers for you to oblige him and show him your affection, — an occasion which may not return again so soon. . . . You are afraid to speak to the king, and you are not afraid to disobey and disoblige him! I think I shall release you for the present from any verbal explanation with him, but I demand that you should convince him by your conduct of your respect and of your tenderness by doing on every occasion what will please him; and see that you leave nothing for him to desire on this

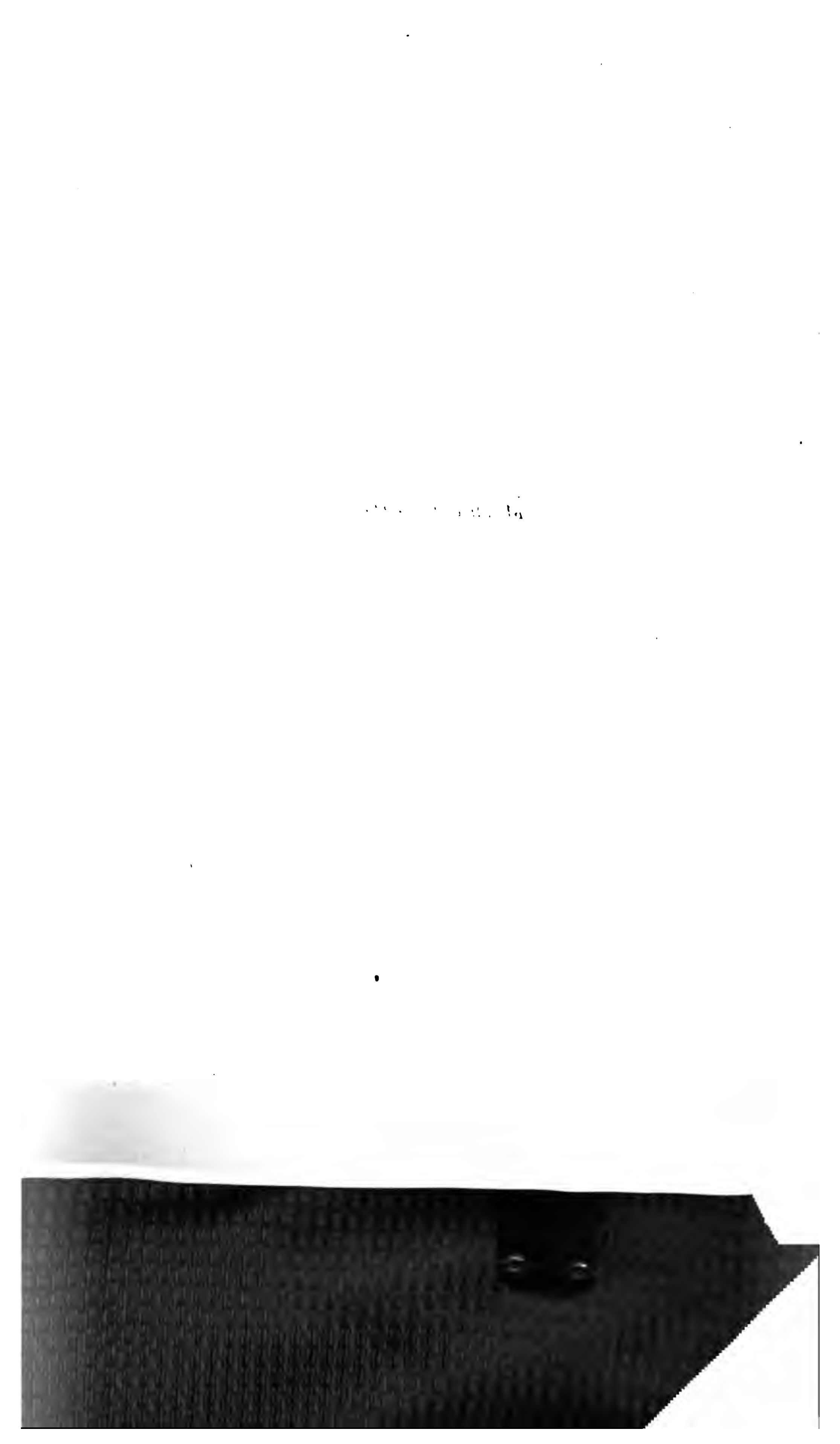
point, no antagonism in example or discourse. Even should you embroil yourself with every one else, I cannot spare you this; you have but one object, and that is to please and obey the will of the king; if you conduct yourself thus, I shall release you for a certain time from the obligation of any verbal explanation with the king."

It is difficult not to feel that this great consideration for the respect due to the royal majesty was somewhat strange under the circumstances, when the royal majesty was showing so little respect for itself. Under whatever paraphrases the thought was veiled, the whole tenor of it was this, — and Maria Theresa was ready to sacrifice a verbal explanation with the king to this pressing necessity, — that she should speak to a woman whose presence at the court was a public scandal; for to separate the mistress from the lady who had been presented was singularly subtle but scarcely practicable. However, if one word had sufficed, but no! "If you were in a position to see, as I do, all that occurs here," Marie Antoinette replied, "you would know that this woman and her set will never be content with a word, and that it will always be beginning again. I do not say that I shall never speak to her, but I cannot agree to speak to her at a given time in order that she may boast of it beforehand and triumph."

Marie Antoinette was right. Madame du Barry had the audacity and the passions of the class whence she was sprung. New instances repeatedly confirmed this. At the suppers in the little château over which she presided, she had pushed her insolence so far as to try to sit beside the dauphin; she sought to multiply her visits to the dauphiness; she had a pavilion built which overlooked a garden hitherto reserved for the royal family; she arrogated the right of disposing of all the offices in the households of the princes. At the marriage of the Comte d'Artois she revived the scandal which had arisen at the marriage of the dauphiness; she dined in public with the royal family, and wore at this dinner gems worth five millions. She even went further: the Duc d'Aiguillon, in concert with Madame Louise, whom one is astonished to find involved in this intrigue, sought to obtain from the Pope the annulment of the marriage of Madame du Barry in order that she might be in a position to marry the king; she would have been a strange Maintenon to a strange Louis XIV. "If the empress saw all that occurs here," Marie Antoinette said, "she would pardon me. No one would have the patience to stand it."




Madame la Comtesse
du Barry



Madame du Barry.

In vain the Duc d'Aiguillon contrived new schemes with Madame de Narbonne to persuade Marie Antoinette to treat the favourite better; in vain Madame Adélaïde, who had become reconciled to the countess out of policy, sought to reconcile her niece to her. The influence of the old aunt was past, and the dauphin replied dryly to her hints, "I advise you, my aunt, not to meddle in the intrigues of Monsieur d'Aiguillon, for he is a bad fellow." When Madame du Barry presented to the dauphiness her niece, who had been recently married, she could not obtain a word either for her or for herself. Three months later she met with no better reception for her sister-in-law, the Comtesse d'Argicourt. Maria Theresa scolded; but Marie Antoinette contented herself with replying that if she had acted otherwise the dauphin would have disapproved. And she added these words, which left her mother little hope of effecting a change, "When one has adopted a course of behaviour, one should not depart from it."

The favourite, however, no longer complained. Mercy had made some observations to her one day on the present and future, and the advantage of managing the royal family, that had produced their effect. The future looked dark for Madame du Barry. Her dismissal had already been talked of. The king was growing old; divers symptoms had warned him that infirmities had come with years; he might recall to memory the faith he had known in his youth. The sudden death of some of his intimates, struck down almost before his eyes, had made a profound impression on his frivolous mind. He began to discourse of his age, of the state of his health, of the awful account that each man must some day render unto God of the use he had made of his life. An intrigue skilfully conducted, and for which they had the wit to gain over Madame Louise, to oust the confessor of the king, the Abbé Maudoux, a pious and enlightened priest, who was at the same time Marie Antoinette's confessor, had failed, owing to the firmness of the young princess. Did all these considerations determine Madame du Barry to change her conduct toward her who was but dauphiness to-day, but who might be queen to-morrow? However that may be, from the beginning of the last months of 1773, we find the favourite employing unheard-of efforts to win over Marie Antoinette. Madame du Barry made incessant overtures to her; she offered to get the king to recall the Comtesse de Gramont if the dauphiness would express a

desire to have her do so. She even went so far as to propose to persuade the old monarch to buy her a magnificent pair of diamond ear-rings, estimated to be worth seven hundred thousand livres. Despite her love for gems, the dauphiness replied simply that she had no desire to increase the number she already possessed. Beaten as enemy, repelled as ally, Madame du Barry adopted the only course proper for her, and the one she should never have departed from: she remained quiet and made no more complaints.

This was the end and the proper solution, and the one, moreover, which it might have been easy to foretell, of that long and scandalous wrangle in which, in contempt of all order, natural and divine, a mistress, dragged from the mud, had held at bay during four years a princess of the royal blood, and wife to the heir of the crown of France, — a wrangle which had given occasion to so many annoyances at court, to so many legitimate revolts on the part of Marie Antoinette, to so many wise manœuvres on the part of Mercy, to so many severe and unjust reprimands from Maria Theresa. For those who reason coldly, with that haughty indifference to the moral aspect of a question, and regard for material interest alone, which is one of the traditions of modern diplomacy, it is easy to understand the disquietude of the empress, her incessant recommendations, even her exactions; but it is more easy to comprehend — we would willingly say, to share — the virginal repugnance of Marie Antoinette. Perhaps the motives of the empress were more prudent; but those of the dauphiness were incontestably finer. One loves to feel that delicate fibre of wounded modesty vibrate in the heart of the young woman, and one contemplates with emotion that "chastity of honour," as Burke says, which feared to soil the whiteness of its wings by any unworthy contact. Marie Antoinette comes out of the conflict nobler and purer. If politics condemn her, public honour absolves her.

CHAPTER VII.

Popularity of the Dauphiness.—Traits of Kindness.—The Peasant of Achères.—The Burning of the Hôtel Dieu.—Entrance of the Dauphin and Dauphiness into Paris.—The Universal Enthusiasm.—Letter from Marie Antoinette to her Mother.—Representations at the Comédie Française and at the Comédie Italienne. — The Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois; their Marriages; their Relations with the Dauphiness. — The Amusements of the Young Couples. — Comedy in their Private Apartments. — The Intimacy of the Dauphin and the Dauphiness. — The Dauphin becomes less Timid, the Dauphiness more Thoughtful. — The Assured Position of Marie Antoinette at the Court in the Beginning of May, 1774.

ALL these disputes, however, did not in any way lessen the popularity of the dauphiness. Apart from some courtiers whose fortunes were influenced by them, and some chroniclers whose gazettes were supported by them, the public concerned itself but little with these petty intrigues, woven within the narrow limits of the royal palaces. It had been, as it were, bewildered by the fresh and gracious apparition which had traversed France from Strasburg to Versailles like a brilliant and kindly meteor; it continued to believe in her brilliancy and her goodness. "The natural disposition of the French is to love their princes," the Maréchal de Noailles wrote in 1753. The people did not distress themselves because that child of fifteen smiled at the antiquated mode of certain old dowagers, or broke certain rules of etiquette to the horror of Madame de Noailles. The people loved their dauphiness; they saw only the fresh bloom of her cheek and her tenderness of heart. Unfortunately they had only too little opportunity of observing them. Certain malicious jealousies had caused the postponement of the solemn entry of the young couple into the good city of Paris. But in the distance, where Marie Antoinette was kept, the public saw her ever charming, as on the day of her arrival, kind and sympathetic, as on the day she sent



all the money in her purse to those wounded on the Place Louis XV. "Her youth," said Montbarrey, "her face, her figure, seduced all hearts and called forth enthusiasm." It would seem as if they hailed her as the bride of a whole people; she was indeed — as a pamphleteer above suspicion wrote — "the idol of the nation." France, who knew not where to bestow its traditional love for its princes, gave it with both hands to the dauphiness. She was the bright beacon toward which all eyes turned, the fertile source whence sprang all the graces. It was incredible that any popular measure should be undertaken without originating with her or passing through her hands.

"Madame the Dauphiness is making herself adored here," wrote the impartial Mercy at the end of 1770; "and public opinion is so fixed on this point that some days ago on the occasion of a diminution of the price of bread the people of Paris said openly in the streets and markets that it was surely Madame the Dauphiness who had solicited and obtained this reduction for the benefit of the poor people."

These charming traits, which sprang naturally from her heart and were carried by the thousand voices of fame abroad, sustained and augmented the popular enthusiasm. It was related that when the Duc de Duras, gentleman of the bedchamber, proposed to the young princess to give some balls during her sojourn at Fontainebleau, she replied that though it would be very agreeable to her to do so, the expenditures would thereby be increased, and she would not have it said that money could be found for her amusements and not for the salaries of the people in her service; and that therefore she should decline to consider his suggestion. They knew that she had used her influence in behalf of some soldiers who had been too severely punished. It was told that one day during a chase, the animal being brought to bay took to the river; the hunters pressed forward to be in at the death, but in order to accomplish this it was necessary to traverse a field of wheat. The dauphiness ordered them to make a détour, preferring, she said, to miss the spectacle rather than occasion so much harm to the farmers, who were always ill indemnified for such losses.

Another time during the chase, while passing over a bridge the postilion of her carriage fell, and four of the horses passed over his body; they picked him up, bleeding and unconscious. The dauphiness immediately stopped and desired that the man's

wounds should be dressed before her. "My friend," she said to a page, with spontaneous vivacity, "go for a doctor." "Run quickly for a litter," she said to another; "see if he speaks, if he is conscious." And she would not leave the place until she was assured that the wounded man would be well cared for and carried gently to Versailles, where she had him visited by her own surgeon. Both the court and the public were enraptured, and the one remark at Paris and at Versailles was that in this act Maria Theresa would have recognized her daughter, and Henry IV. his heir.

The young princess exhibited the most charming consideration and exquisite delicacy for her attendants. One day the horse of her equerry kicked her on the foot; she concealed her pain and continued her walk, although her foot was greatly swollen, in order to spare the man the chagrin of having been the involuntary author of the accident. Another day a lackey hurt himself in trying to move a piece of furniture too heavy for him; she bathed the wound herself and made him a compress of her handkerchief. Another time she gave up her rides, although we know her passion for them, in order that her equerry might remain with his wife, who was ill.

And it was not only to the persons in her service to whom she showed sympathy and consideration, but also to the poor and all who were unfortunate. A year after the incidents which we have just related, a groom of the Comtesse de Provence, in traversing the city of Compiègne, fell from his horse and was seriously hurt. The princess passed coldly on, without further concern for the accident; but the dauphiness, who was following at a short distance, stopped her carriage, gave orders that the wounded man should be cared for, and did not continue her way until she saw that her orders had been carried out. The public did not fail to compare the conduct of the two sisters-in-law, and one can imagine that the comparison was not to the advantage of the Comtesse de Provence.

But her best-known deed, and the one which made the greatest sensation, was that which is known as the incident of Achères. It was at Fontainebleau, during the hunt again, on Oct. 16, 1773. The deer, being at bay, took refuge in a small enclosure of the village of Achères. Finding no issue thence, and rendered furious by his despair, he turned upon a peasant who was cultivating the enclosure, and gored him twice with his antlers, — once in the

thigh and once in the body. The man was thrown down, severely wounded. His wife, wild with grief, flew toward the hunters and fell in a faint. The king, after giving orders that she should be looked after, withdrew. The dauphiness descended from her carriage, made the unfortunate woman inhale her salts, and after having brought her out of her faint, showered upon her money, consolation, and tears. She then made her get into her carriage and commanded that she should be taken to her house; nor did she rejoin the hunt until she had assured herself that the two invalids would receive the necessary attention.

The entire court, moved by her noble example, hastened to aid the unfortunate ones. The dauphin emptied his purse into their hands; the Comtesse de Provence did the same. On the following days Marie Antoinette did not fail to send to inquire after the wounded man, whose condition had at first seemed critical, but who recovered, nevertheless, thanks to the care which the surgeons of the court, on the order of the young princess, bestowed upon him. The public, on learning these details, and delighted with the tears of sympathy which the dauphiness had shed, was inexhaustible in its praises of her; there was but one cry of admiration for her. At Fontainebleau the people crowded together wherever there was a chance of seeing her. At Marly, at Versailles, they greeted her with such enthusiasm and acclamation when she went out as almost to frighten her. The papers of the time were full of verses in her honour, and one witty woman, the Princesse de Beauvau, originated this saying, which was too much in the taste of the day not to be popular, "Madame the Dauphiness follows nature, and Monsieur the Dauphin follows Madame the Dauphiness."

We might multiply indefinitely these instances, which abound in the memoirs of her contemporaries and the reports of Mercy. We will cite but one more. During the night of the 29th and 30th of December, 1772, a frightful fire broke out in the Hôtel Dieu at Paris. The fire, after having smouldered in the cellars, burst forth toward one o'clock in the morning with such violence that the light was visible as far as the outskirts of the city. Despite the promptitude with which aid arrived, despite the activity of the fire department, which had been recently organized, and the devotion of workers at whose head were the archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur de Beaumont, the principal magistrates, and the priests of the city, the majority of the buildings were destroyed;

the loss was valued at two millions. Ten of the sick were burned to death; the others were carried in haste to the archbishop's palace, to Notre Dame and to the churches; and several of those who had run to their aid perished in the flames or were wounded.

Seized with consternation at this frightful disaster, the archbishop of Paris made a warm appeal to public charity and ordered collections to be taken. When Marie Antoinette was informed of it, she hastened to send a thousand écus, and with a modesty which does her even greater honour than her compassion, took the most minute precautions that no one should know of it, pushing the mystery so far as to say nothing of it to Mercy or to Vermond.

Despite this, the secret leaked out; and the public was the more grateful to the young princess for her generous charity since the initiative had come from her, and no one of the royal family had set her the example. But such compliments were embarrassing to her modesty, and she sought to escape them.

When, therefore, on June 8, 1773, Marie Antoinette, preceded by these memories and bearing on her forehead the aureole of all her hopes, finally made her entrance into the capital, the enthusiasm of the Parisians was indescribable. It was customary to have this ceremony of the entrance of the dauphin follow shortly after the celebration of the marriage; but the cabal, which feared the popularity of the young princess and desired not to have it increased by the glory of a public triumph, had succeeded in awakening the distrustful susceptibility of the old monarch, who for a long time had become unused to acclamations. Docile to the suggestions of his mistress and his minister, Louis XV. had always put off the official ceremony, and Marie Antoinette, despite her ardent desire, had never had the pleasure of seeing Paris and of being seen there; she had not even been able, as she one day planned, to drive through the boulevards. Finally, in the month of May, 1773, she decided to speak to the king of her desire; and this prince, who could never refuse anything to her face, replied that he demanded nothing better, and that she was free to choose the day that would suit her. The date was fixed for the 8th of June; the preparations were pushed with vigour, and the ceremony was magnificent. Nothing like it had been seen for a long time. The people of Paris were eager to see their young princess, whose grace and virtues were celebrated by fame, and whom they did not yet know. At the Gate

of the Conference the couple were received by the Duc de Brissac, governor of Paris, the lieutenant of police, Monsieur de Sartines, the *corps de ville*, and the provost of the merchants. There, while they were being presented with the keys of the good city on a silver platter, the women of the *halles* offered them the first products of the market, flowers and fruits. The august couple with their suite then entered state coaches and traversed the Quai des Tuileries, the Pont Royal, the Quai Conti, where the provost of the mint had ranged his company of cavalry, the Pont Neuf, where the lieutenant of the prison awaited them at the foot of the statue of Henry IV., with the guards *de robe courte*, passed along the Quai des Orfevres, the Rue St. Louis, passing before the Hôtel Dieu, where the mother prioress stood with her nuns, and arrived at Notre Dame. The dauphin and dauphiness were met at the door by the archbishop and the chapter, and went to kneel in the choir, and thence to the chapel of the Holy Virgin, where the chaplain of the king celebrated low mass while the choir sang a motet. After mass they visited the treasury, then went to Ste. Geneviève, making the tour of the shrine of the saint, and finally returned to the Tuileries. At the College of Louis le Grand, the rector of the university, at the head of the four faculties, addressed them; at the College Montaigu the students recited verses to them.

These were the official ceremonies, but what was not on the programme was the truly extraordinary enthusiasm of the public; along the entire route of their progress the crowd was so compact that it was almost impossible for the carriage to advance. Everywhere were decorations, triumphal arches, pavements strewn with flowers, everywhere frantic *vivats*. The dauphiness had a smile for each, a bow for persons of distinction, a beaming countenance for all. "It is impossible," Mercy wrote, "to show more grace, more charm, and more presence of mind than Madame the Archduchess has displayed at this juncture." Her smile went to the heart. Hands were clapped, handkerchiefs waved, hats thrown into the air; there was universal delight. With her habitual kindness, the young princess ordered her guards to allow every one to approach; it seemed as if for that day the ancient etiquette had been abolished. At the Tuileries the women of the *halles* dined in the concert-hall; palace and garden were both full of people. When the dauphiness appeared on the balcony she could not help exclaiming,

frightened by the sea of humanity, "Heavens, what a crowd!" "Madame," replied the Duc de Brissac, gallantly, "without wishing to displease Monsieur the Dauphin, here are two hundred thousand people who are in love with you."

But the dauphin was not jealous; he was happy. The enthusiasm of the crowd, the charm of his companion, reacted upon him, and conquering his natural timidity, he responded with ease to the speeches which were addressed to him. His habitual coldness was, as it were, warmed by the reflection of the grace of his young wife; and the populace, remarking with pleasure the unexpected transformation, ascribed the honour of it to the dauphiness. "How beautiful she is! How charming she is!" were heard on every side.

After the dinner in public the couple, arm in arm, descended into the garden of the Tuileries, where they walked. Fifty thousand persons were gathered in the *allées*, on the benches, on the balustrades, even in the trees. The masses were so compact that the royal couple remained for nearly three quarters of an hour unable to advance or to retreat; for a moment even they were separated from their suite. But this eagerness delighted them both; they felt themselves in safety in the midst of their people, enjoyed their delight, listened with emotion to the acclamations, naïvely enthusiastic, which escaped from all hearts; and the only order which the dauphiness gave to her guards was not to turn away any one, and to allow every one who wished to approach.

When, after this delightful walk and before their departure, the two princes ascended to the château to contemplate for the last time the spectacle, and remained during half an hour on the terrace, despite the rays of a hot sun, saluting with their hands to the right and left the crowd that pressed about the base of the Tuileries, there rose from the assemblage but one universal cry of joy and delight. Some one had said that France had felt for Louis XV. the affection of both mother and mistress; it seemed on that 8th of June, 1773, as though the capital had bestowed some of that tenderness upon Marie Antoinette.

As for the dauphiness, she could hardly restrain the tears of happiness which filled her eyes. "Ah, these good people!" she repeated again and again.

"I had on Tuesday last," she wrote a few days later to her mother, "an experience which I shall never forget. We made our entrance into Paris. As for honours, we received more than you can imagine; but this,



though delightful, was not what touched me most: 't was the tenderness and eagerness of those poor people, who, despite the taxes with which they are burdened, were transported with joy to see us. When we went to walk in the Tuileries, there was such a crowd that for three quarters of an hour we could neither advance nor retreat. Monsieur the Dauphin and I ordered the guards several times not to strike any one, which produced a very good effect. There was such good order during the day that, despite the enormous mob which followed us everywhere, no one was hurt. On our return from our walk we ascended to the open terrace and remained there for half an hour. I cannot tell you, my dear mamma, what transports of joy, of affection, were manifested toward us during that time. Before withdrawing we waved our hands to the people, which gave great pleasure. How happy ought one in our position to be, to be able to gain the friendship of a whole people so cheaply! Yet there is nothing more precious; I have felt it, and I shall never forget it."

Louis XV. awaited at Versailles with some impatience the return of his grandchildren. "My children," he said to them when they returned, "I was almost uneasy. You must be very fatigued with your day." "It has been the sweetest of my life," replied the dauphiness; and associating with a delicate flattery the name of the king and those of his children who had just been the object of this popular demonstration, "You must be exceedingly beloved by the Parisians," she said to the old monarch, "for they have treated us very well."

Delighted with this enthusiastic reception, the young princess had but one desire: to return often to that city which had greeted her with such acclamation. She obtained permission from the king to return thither every week to the play; at first with all the equipage of royalty, to the sound of cannon from the Bastille and Invalides, with a great display of French and Swiss guards round the theatre and even on the stage; soon, however, with the greatest simplicity, in a simple dress and with a small suite. Whether her visits were ceremonious or private, the success of them was the same. "A volume might be written," Mercy said, "of all the affectionate sayings and remarks concerning the figure, the grace, the air of affability and kindness of Madame the Archduchess." One day, — it was on June 23,— at the Comédie Française, the "Siege of Calais" was given. In the third act, where Mademoiselle Vestris spoke the two lines,

"The French in their prince love to find a brother,
Who, born son of the State, becomes its father,"

she turned toward the dauphin; the entire audience applauded with transport.

A little farther on, when this passage was recited,

> "What a lesson for you, superb potentate!
> Oh, keep watch o'er your subjects of lowest estate,
> Lest far from your gaze one from misery dies
> Who one day your empire had saved,"

it was the dauphin and dauphiness who applauded in their turn, and this exhibition of feeling was received with new transports of tenderness and gratitude.

Another day, at the Comédie Italienne, the "Deserter" was given. The refrain of a couplet was "Long live the king." The dauphiness applauded. The refrain was repeated. The actor Clairval added, "And his dear children." The entire parterre joined with the actors in clapping their hands, and the entertainment ended with the singing of five couplets improvised in honour of the young couple.

At each visit — to the Ste. Ovide fair, to the salon, where the dauphin stopped before the picture by Marchy which represented him walking in the garden of the Tuileries with his wife on his arm, in the garden of Maréchal de Biron — there was the same enthusiasm, the same acclamations; and when the court departed for Compiègne, it was not without regret that Marie Antoinette left the good city of Paris.

Despite the pains which were taken to arouse his jealousy, Louis XV. enjoyed this brilliant triumph of his grandchildren. Mesdames, it is true, took umbrage at it; and the cabal redoubled its hate and rage, but it spent itself in vain efforts. The entrance of the Comte and Comtesse de Provence, to which they tried to give royal magnificence to counterbalance the impression produced by that of the dauphin, but ended in miserable failure. The pomp and circumstance left the public indifferent. The Comte and Comtesse de Provence were completely eclipsed by the dauphiness; it was of her alone the public talked; it was she alone whom they wished to see.

We may think that, surrounded by this bright armour of popular sympathy, the dauphiness had no need to fear the intrigues of the palace and the rivalries of the court. The Comte de Provence, who was forty years later to inaugurate the constitutional régime in France, and to bind with so wise a hand the

wounds given to the country by the Revolution and the Empire, had not then shown the qualities which he displayed upon the throne. A year younger than the dauphin, he had from his infancy possessed a precocious ambition, a serious disposition, but one that was also distrustful and inclined to intrigue; of a subtle and cultivated mind, possessing a taste both for letters and politics, highly valued by those around him, and usually to the disparagement of his older brother, he scarcely dissimulated his resentment at being in the second rank when he believed himself fitted by nature for the first. With such aspirations and sentiments he would seem to be an instrument ready made to the hands of the cabal hostile to Marie Antoinette. They tried to make him pose as a rival to his brother, particularly when his marriage to a princess of Savoy had assured his position at court; they affected on that occasion to establish his household on a scale equal to that of the dauphin. His wife, who was without intelligence or grace and Italian in character, lent herself readily to these petty and malicious attempts. On several occasions Marie Antoinette had to complain of the attitude of the young couple toward her. Then came a complete change of base. Was it a recognition of their impotence in face of the growing popularity of the dauphiness? Was it regret that he had been led by the Duc de la Vauguyon? Or was it simply a change of front in a plan perseveringly ambitious? However that may be, after the death of his governor, the young prince sought a reconciliation with his sister-in-law, avowed to her that he had been wrong, and laid the whole blame upon Monsieur de la Vauguyon. Marie Antoinette, who was sweet-tempered and harboured no rancour, was only too willing to forget annoyances; their relations were promptly established upon a footing of intimacy. Each morning the Comte de Provence came to the apartment of the dauphiness to bring her the news of the court, the songs and *bons-mots* of the day; he contrived with her schemes for their amusement, laid before her his plans of conduct, and proposed that they should form a party at the court. Always confiding and without calculation, Marie Antoinette gave herself up to the charm of an intimacy which, thanks to the wise counsels of Mercy, was productive of pleasure but of no inconvenience; the need of society, the desire to escape from the despotism of Mesdames, the attraction of his witty conversation, disposed her toward this friendship. But discovering one day an understand-

ing between her brother-in-law and the Duc d'Aiguillon, she felt that the young prince was not perfectly candid in his behaviour. From that time she was on her guard; the visits of the Comte de Provence became less frequent; and their relations, while remaining friendly, ceased to be confidential.

The second brother of the dauphin, the Comte d'Artois, was by no means so ambitious. With a charming face, a good figure, lively and easy manners, skilful in all bodily exercises, brave and gallant as a Bourbon, the only prince of the royal family with any pretensions to elegance in the eyes of his contemporaries, he occupied himself less with business than with pleasure; he did not desire to rule, but to amuse and be amused. His character was the exact opposite of that of the Comte de Provence. Where the one was cold and designing, leaving nothing to chance, the other was gay and open, amiable and enthusiastic, but vain and frivolous, heedless in his remarks, inconsequent in his behaviour. He plagued the ministers, defied opinion, listened to no one, and often drew upon himself the displeasure and remonstrances of his older brother. The dauphiness affected not to take him seriously, and to turn into jest whatever he did or said that was unreasonable. This conduct, while it mortified the young prince, impressed him; but it is easy to see that this impression would not last long, and that the day would come when the society of that brother-in-law, who was witty and agreeable, but hot-headed, turbulent, and "bold to excess," might become a peril.

As for the Comtesse d'Artois, ill-favoured by nature, small, with a poor figure, a very long nose, badly set eyes, a large mouth, and irregular features, not less ill-favoured in the matter of wit and talent, insignificant, and little loved by her husband, she could not possibly rival Marie Antoinette, although the cabal for a moment aided by the minister of Sardinia, the Comte de la Marmora, tried to oppose the two Piedmont sisters to the Austrian archduchess.

But Marie Antoinette was not jealous. Strong in her superiority, and guided by the inspiration of her heart, she was not disturbed by these machinations, which could not touch her, and was only concerned to establish harmony in the royal family. She was successful in this delicate enterprise. Without forming any party, as the Comte de Provence had suggested, which would not have been without danger, the young couples formed a circle.

They organized diversions together; they gave balls, parties, family suppers; they went together to the balls at the opera. They did more: they played comedy. In one of the rooms of the *entresol* at Versailles where no one ever went, they arranged a stage from which the divers characters might appear and disappear into an *armoire*. They resolved to learn to play the best pieces in the French *repertoire*. The three princesses, the Comte de Provence, and the Comte d'Artois were the actors; Monsieur Campan was the manager of this little impromptu troupe; the dauphin was the audience. The Comte de Provence knew his rôles without mistake; the Comte d'Artois repeated his with grace, the dauphiness with intelligence; the other princesses played badly. From time to time one heard the loud laugh of the dauphin greeting the entrance of the actors on the stage. This lasted for some time. They amused themselves greatly; the very mystery which surrounded the royal troupe gave a more piquant flavour to the forbidden fruit. Unfortunately, one day Monsieur Campan, already in costume, went in search of something he had left in his dressing-room, and ran across a valet of the wardrobe. The secret was discovered; they were afraid it might be betrayed. What would the king, what would Mesdames have said to these amusements which were worthy of school-children on a holiday? They feared their reproaches, and gave up a diversion which had made a little variety in the monotony of the court, and for which the dauphin himself had acquired a veritable liking.

The intimacy, however, of the young married couple increased day by day. The dauphin was falling under the charm of his young wife; and she on her side was beginning to appreciate his solid qualities, his loyalty, and the genuine tenderness which lay beneath his rough exterior. Despite the wit of the Comte de Provence and the elegance of the Comte d'Artois, she did not hesitate to acknowledge that for the stability of their relation, her husband was greatly their superior. One day, irritated by the indirect methods of the Comte de Provence, and hurt by the frivolities of the Comte d'Artois, she threw herself into the arms of the dauphin, exclaiming, "I feel, my dear husband, that I love you more and more every day. Your upright character and frankness charm me; the more I compare you with others, the more I appreciate your worth."

There were undoubtedly many things in the young prince which left much to be desired, even traits which sometimes

shocked the feminine delicacy, the innate distinction of Marie Antoinette. It would have been difficult, perhaps, to meet two characters offering greater contrast than those of the two young people. It was vivacity united to coldness, expansiveness to taciturnity, the incarnation of grace to a sort of native inelegance; in a word, if I may express myself thus, it was a polished diamond by the side of a rough diamond. The dauphin had certain tastes which ill accorded with the great elegance of his wife; being passionately devoted to the chase, violent exercise, manual labour, he pursued them with an immoderate ardour which undermined his health, and made him contract an air of negligence and roughness which is always displeasing in a future sovereign, and was especially displeasing at the court of Versailles, which at that time set the fashion for all Europe. The dauphiness realized this; she reproached her husband for his slovenliness with perhaps too great warmth; the dauphin was at first provoked, and then began to cry. His young wife was touched; she mingled her tears with those of her husband, and the reconciliation was very tender. The Comtesse de Provence, who witnessed this scene, demanded in jest if the peace were made, and the dauphin replied gallantly that "quarrels between lovers were never of long duration." Under the influence of this gracious Egeria an improvement manifested itself in the manners of the young prince. This "matter in the rough," as Joseph II. called him, began to yield up its treasures. The dauphin tried to conquer his timidity. He talked more, was easier in public, took greater interest in dancing and in the amusements of society, besides giving more time to serious occupations, and in particular to reading; for this young woman who had been so often reproached for not devoting herself sufficiently to intellectual occupations, was the first to encourage her husband to study. She rejoiced in his progress silently, taking no credit to herself for it, and was only eager to show it off; but the public ascribed the honour of it to her, and the young prince showed his gratitude on every occasion. "I must acknowledge," he said to her one day, "that you always advise me well." "Do you love me?" he asked her another time. "Yes," replied the princess, with spontaneous frankness, "and you cannot doubt it; I love you sincerely, and I esteem you even more." The dauphin was touched by this naïve avowal; he became tender and almost gallant toward his wife. His confidence in her increased day by day, and he showed

her on every occasion a condescension without limit. "His deference to Madame the Archduchess," Mercy wrote, scarcely three weeks before the death of Louis XV., "proves how much importance he attaches to her advice, and one sees that his gratitude binds him more and more to his august wife."

At this date Marie Antoinette's position was so secure that nothing seemed able to shake it. For a year, and particularly since her triumphant entrance into Paris, her power had constantly increased. The cabal, which had tried to undermine it, had been obliged to acknowledge itself defeated. Mesdames, after the first moment of anger, had resigned themselves, in appearance at least, to see in the dauphiness the future mistress of the State. The Comte and Comtesse de Provence studied but to please her; the Duc d'Aiguillon silenced his rancour and sought occasions to be agreeable to her; the comptroller-general took her orders; the favourite herself made overtures; and all those at court who took thought for their future saw that their only course was to seek security in the friendship and good-will of the dauphiness. She disarmed all jealousies and defeated all intrigues.

As for her success with the public, it was too brilliant, and we have described it at too great length above to refer to it here.

But what it is important to note, because it has been contested, is that Marie Antoinette owed this success to herself and to the development of her good qualities. Whatever one may say, and despite the relapses inevitable at her age, she had during those four years made sincere efforts to correct the faults which her mother and the Comte de Mercy had signalized to her with such persevering vigilance.

"I shall not fall into more errors than I can help," she said one day; "when it does happen, however, that I am guilty of any, I shall acknowledge them." She kept her word, and in many ways succeeded in doing better. The lively, heedless, somewhat wilful child who had crossed the Rhine on the 7th of May, 1770, had grown to be a self-possessed young woman, somewhat ardent perhaps at times, and always frank and naïve, but no longer following her first impulse, calculating better the import of her words and actions, and adding to the attraction of her naturalness and openness of heart the more durable charm of a consistent behaviour and thoughtful attitude. It was with legitimate pride that she could say to her faithful counsellor one day, "Acknowledge that I have reformed in many ways," which he could not deny.

She tried sincerely to interest and apply her mind, formerly careless and inattentive, to serious subjects. Her intelligence, which was marvellously quick to understand affairs, but which hated them extremely, began to lend itself somewhat more to the complications of politics, while her piety remained intact and pure under the enlightened direction of a virtuous and modest priest, the Abbé Maudoux. Possessed of judgment which was always clear when free from foreign influences, perspicacity which often put Mercy to rout, wonderful sagacity in judging men and things, her eminent qualities seemed to assure a brilliant future and irresistible empire to the dauphiness, if she could but conquer the remnant of her timidity, her too great love of pleasure, and, above all, resist the importunities and insinuations of those around her. And this promise of power lent a new charm to the arts in which she excelled, — that of receiving at court, of presiding over the circle, of saying an amiable word to every one; to her innate kindliness, now enhanced by a serene dignity and self-composure, the result of her maturer age.

All those who had known her from her infancy and who saw her at the end of 1773 or at the beginning of the year 1774, which was to be so decisive for her, — the Baron de Neny, Field-Marshal Lascy, — were struck by this happy transformation. Mercy wrote, "With regard to the instincts of her character and judgment Madame the Dauphiness is so fortunately gifted that it is morally impossible she should ever fall into an error of any consequence, either in the present or future."

And Maria Theresa herself, who was so severe to her daughter, severe sometimes even to injustice, could not help replying to her faithful ambassador, on April 5, 1774, "I am reassured by the news which you send me of the behaviour of my daughter."

And it is thus that Marie Antoinette, surrounded by intrigues and cabals, but with no longer any cause to fear them, beloved by the public, envied but respected at court, dominating all by the superiority of her rank, eclipsing all by the brilliancy of her personal qualities, — that Marie Antoinette, smiling and gay, advanced confidently and with a firm step toward the hour when the dauphiness was to become the queen of France.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH OF LOUIS XV.

ON Wednesday, the 22d of April, 1774, at Trianon, Louis XV. was seized with a sudden chill, which was followed by a fever and violent headache; on the 28th he decided to return to Versailles; on the 29th he was bled twice; during the night of the 29th and 30th all the worst symptoms of small-pox declared themselves. The disease was of so dangerous a nature that the very air of the palace seemed to be infected; fifty persons caught it from simply traversing the galleries at Versailles; ten died of it; and the Marquis de Letorière, who had opened the door of the royal bedchamber only for two minutes, was struck down and died in a few hours.

From the beginning of his illness Mesdames, with admirable devotion and despite the strongest expostulations, did not hesitate to brave contagion, and shut themselves up with their father, remaining day and night by his bedside and beneath the very curtains. Marie Antoinette wished to do the same; the old monarch would not permit it, and forbade all communication between himself and the young royal couple, who retired into the most complete isolation, the dauphin refusing to give any order and even to speak to the ministers so long as his grandfather lived.

Startling intrigues were carried on round the bed of the sick man. The parties Barrien and Anti-Barrien, Aiguilloniste and Anti-Aiguilloniste, engaged in a furious battle, whose prize was the soul of this poor prince. Unheard-of efforts were made to hinder any priest from reaching him who might speak to him of eternity and thus persuade him to put an end to the scandals of his life. Madame du Barry braved the contagion in order to retain her influence, and came each day to sit with the invalid; but it was noticed that the king spoke to his mistress with indif-

ference. Their watchfulness redoubled. The Duc d'Aiguillon, the Duc de Richelieu, the Duc d'Aumont, and Laborde, the groom of the chamber, forbade with jealous rigour the entrance of all suspicious persons. On the 2d of May the archbishop of Paris came to Versailles; he had great difficulty in seeing the dying man, at whose door the Duc de Richelieu tried to detain him. The interview did not last more than a quarter of an hour, and produced no result. The physicians, who had been won over, declared that he must not speak to the king of the sacrament on the risk of killing him, in the condition of suppuration in which he then was. Before this menacing declaration the grand almoner of France himself, the Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon, dared not mention the sacraments, but held himself ready to come forward when needed.

Suddenly, by one of those turns whereby God often foils the calculations of men, the event so feared by some, so desired by others, occurred. On Wednesday, May 4, feeling the disease increase, the king called for Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon, and asked him what was his malady, the name of which they had hitherto concealed from him. When he learned that it was small-pox, he said, "One does not recover from that at my age; I must put my affairs in order."

He sent for Madame du Barry. "Madame," he said, "as I am contemplating receiving the sacrament, it is not proper for you to remain here, as I do not wish the occurrence at Metz to be repeated, and desire to avoid all scandal. Arrange your retreat with the Duc d'Aiguillon; I have given him orders to see that you lack for nothing." That same day at four o'clock the favourite departed in the carriage of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, who conducted her to a country house belonging to the duke at Rueil. There, two leagues from Versailles, she waited, informed of every detail by the minister, and ready to return if the king improved.

But the king did not improve. In vain the doctors issued satisfactory bulletins; these reassuring declarations deceived no one: the public, who had no longer anything but contempt for that monarch whom it had once so tenderly loved, received the news with indifference, if not with joy; the courtiers discounted the future. "All those who could enter the chamber were there, as if to witness a curious and somewhat ridiculous show. Every one watched all that occurred, either to write of it or to be able to talk of it; they even jested about it." In certain circles wishes

for the death of the king were almost openly expressed; the agitation of the court was extreme; the rumours, the manœuvres, the intrigues, increased on all sides; the different parties sought a chance to interview the confessor, who, however, remained inaccessible. Some courtiers, turning toward the rising sun, made efforts to approach the young royal family; they were repulsed without pity.

In the midst of all these intrigues and despite the rapid progress of the malady and occasional periods of delirium, the king preserved his self-possession and courage. Several times he demanded his confessor. During the night of the 6th and 7th, at half-past two in the morning, he said to the Duc de Duras, who was watching by him, "This is the third time that I have asked for my confessor; is the Abbé Maudoux not here?" He fell into a stupor for a while; awakening again at the end of half an hour, he inquired once more if the Abbé Maudoux had not arrived. The latter entered; and the courtiers, ever on the alert, took note, with watch in hand, that he remained with the august invalid sixteen minutes. When the priest went out, the king declared that he should receive the sacrament on the following day; but when his physician, La Martinière, observed that he would better do so at once, he determined to receive it on that very day.

At five o'clock Louis XV. sent for the Duc d'Aiguillon and spoke to him in a low voice. It was immediately surmised that he had given orders for the departure of the favourite, and the rumour spread that the confessor had made this departure a condition of absolution. Was there any truth in this rumour? That is a secret which God alone knows. It was noticed only that on three different occasions the king called for the Abbé Maudoux, and that he awaited the sacrament with the greatest impatience, sending the Prince de Beauvau several times to the window to see if the grand almoner had not arrived.

At seven o'clock Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon appeared, bringing the viaticum. The troops were under arms; in obedience to the formal prohibition of their grandfather, the dauphin and his brothers only followed the holy sacrament as far as the foot of the staircase; Mesdames accompanied it to the bedchamber, where the princes of the blood and the ministers were assembled. As soon as he saw the grand almoner, the invalid felt revive within him all the faith which forty years of disorderly

living had not been able to extinguish; he threw off the bed-clothes, uncovered himself, and tried to kneel down, joining his hands together so fervently that it brought tears to all eyes. When they tried to stop him, he cried, "When the good God honours a miserable sinner like me by coming to him, the least that I can do is to receive him with respect." After he had received the communion, he made a sign to the grand almoner, who, turning to the assembled courtiers, said, "Messieurs, the king commands me to say, being unable to speak himself, that he repents of his sins, and that if he has scandalized his people he is sorry for it; that he is firmly resolved to return to the paths of his youth and to employ the remainder of his life in the defence of religion." When the grand almoner spoke of the remorse which the king felt for the scandals of his life, "Monsieur le cardinal," interrupted the dying man, turning himself painfully on his pillow,—"Monsieur le cardinal, repeat those words; repeat them."

With this expression of repentance, which was late but genuine, and in the exercise of an edifying and sincere piety, ended that royal existence, so culpable before God and man. His contemporaries, even the least religious, were struck by his repentance, by the steadfastness with which he sustained the moving ceremonial, and "the tranquillity, the patience, the sweetness, the courage, with which he resolved to fulfil his duties;" and Madame Louise wrote to the Abbé Bertin, "I am so consoled when I think of the singular favour vouchsafed to the king in his last moments, and which he seems to have profited by so well, that if it depended upon me to recall him to life, I confess that I should not wish to plunge him again into the midst of dangers and risk his soul a second time."

After the 7th the disease grew worse; on the 9th all hope was given up. The dauphin requested the prayers of the archbishop of Paris, and ordered the comptroller-general to send two hundred thousand francs to the poor of the capital, enjoining him to take that sum from his allowance and that of the dauphiness. In the evening the bishop of Senlis, grand almoner, administered extreme unction. On the morrow, at eleven o'clock, the death-struggle began. The grand almoner recited the prayers for the dying, and on that same day, May 10, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, just as the cardinal pronounced the words *proficiscere, anima christiana*, Louis XV., devoured by the

infection, his body already falling into decay, but his soul steadfast, preserving to the end his presence of mind, and manifesting to the last evidences of Christian repentance, expired in the midst of universal indifference. A candle placed in one of the windows of the château informed France that his long reign of sixty years was over, and every one prepared hastily to depart. At that moment, an eye-witness recounts, there was a terrible noise exactly resembling thunder heard in the front room of the apartment; it was the crowd of courtiers deserting the antechamber of the dead sovereign to greet the new power of Louis XVI.

CHAPTER IX.

Beginning of the Reign of Louis XVI. — Difficulties of the Situation. — The Hopes of the Public. — Popularity of the New Sovereigns. — Maurepas made Minister. — Fall of the Old Ministers. — Return of Choiseul. — The Politic Attitude of the Queen; her Repugnance to Business. — Maria Theresa, Mercy, and Vermond urge her to attend to it. — Marie Antoinette resists their Advice. — Suppers at the Court. — Etiquette. — The Queen emancipates herself from it. — The Inconveniences that result from this Freedom. — The Inoculation of the King.

IT is told that when the Comtesse de Noailles, who was the first to enter the apartment of the dauphin and dauphiness and to greet them as king and queen of France, appeared, Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette fell upon their knees and, weeping, cried, "O God, guard us, protect us! we are too young to reign."

It was the cry of their heart and the cry of their reason.

The situation was indeed critical. A king of twenty, who had always been systematically separated from affairs; a queen of nineteen, who had no taste for them; a court divided; finances ruined; no prestige abroad; inextricable difficulties at home, which had been daily aggravated by the indifference of Louis XV.; and with all this, a public which was the more exacting as the reforms were imperative, and entertaining the most impatient hopes, — ah! Maria Theresa had good reason to say, "I am distressed, truly distressed; the burden is too great."

Among the populace all was joy and hope. They expected much of that young prince, whom they knew to be serious, diligent, kindly, under his timid exterior; they expected still more of that young princess, who had always been so beautiful and so good. The first acts of the new sovereigns but increased the confidence and exalted the enthusiasm. The king gave up his right to the accession jewels; the queen renounced her right to the girdle, and she accompanied this renunciation with the charm-

ing saying, "No one wears girdles nowadays." "Resurrexit" was graven under the statue of Henry IV. In all the windows the portrait of the young monarch was placed between that of Henry IV. and of Louis XII. with these words, "XII. and IV. make XVI." Voltaire wrote to Frederick II., "We have a young king, who, to be sure, though he does not write verse, writes excellent prose;" and Gresset, complimenting the queen in the name of the Academy, spoke of "the universal delight, the affectionate acclamations, that preceded, accompanied, and followed her steps."

With that exquisite delicacy of heart which was one of her charms, Marie Antoinette, among her first visits, went to see Madame Louise, so cruelly afflicted by the death of her father and the illness of her sisters.

"The queen, on embracing the Carmelite," an eye-witness relates, "held her for a long time in her arms without being able to speak to her, except by her tears. These were so abundant that they caused ours to flow, and those of all who witnessed them; our august mother, who was broken-hearted, could scarcely pronounce a few disconnected words. Her niece perceived this, and bore the whole burden of the interview herself. She had the tact to talk to her of the sentiments of tenderness which her nephew felt for her, without once giving him the title of king, — an attention which our august mother remarked with pleasure. 'My aunt,' Marie Antoinette said to her, 'in all that you require, address yourself to me. I will tell him of it; I will beg him, I will engage him to grant it. I know him; he loves you, and will do anything to please you. When you feel sufficiently strong to receive him, send me word; I will bring him to you.'"

What she was to her aunt she was to every one. "Those who return from Choisy tell marvellous things of the king and queen," a chronicler writes. At La Muette, whither the court was transferred after the sojourn at Choisy, the queen received every one with her accustomed graciousness; many people who had injured her during the preceding reign approached her with fear; she manifested neither humour nor resentment toward them; the queen did not avenge the injuries of the dauphiness. From La Muette she often went to walk in the Bois de Boulogne. One day, perceiving an old man who was working, she approached him and questioned him kindly. When Madame de Noailles tried to expostulate with her on the inconvenience of such familiarity, the queen brusquely turned her back to her; and the king, to whom the lady of honour, so they say, complained, contented himself with replying dryly, "The queen must be allowed to do

as she pleases and to speak to whom she wishes." He himself had desired that the gates of the Bois de Boulogne, which were habitually locked, should be left open; and he walked there, as his wife did, in the midst of an immense concourse of people who were never tired of seeing and blessing him, whom they called Louis the Desired. It is related that he observed in all things the strictest economy, and that he began a reform in the matter of amusements, and what cost him more, put down two hunting establishments, — that of the deer and of the boar; he ordered the lieutenant of police, Sartines, to pay the arrears of all debts for nurses; it was said that he only desired one thing, to be informed of whatever evil was said of him, in order to correct it; and finally that he had a list made out of all the honest men of the kingdom which he kept always before his eyes when he had any appointment to make. "He barricades himself with honest men," the ambassador from Sweden wrote energetically. And the prince himself said to the Duc de Noailles, when he wished to retire because of his age, "Do not leave me; I have need of honest men about me who will point out my duty to me."

Immediate and important satisfaction was given to the public conscience. On the day following the death of Louis XV., the favourite was exiled to the convent of the Bernardines of Pont-aux-Dames, near Macon. Her brother-in-law, the Comte Jean du Barry, the principal author of the various intrigues, was sentenced to be arrested, and only escaped Vincennes by a precipitate flight to England. The coldness which the queen exhibited in public to the Duc d'Aiguillon presaged his approaching fall, and rumour repeated with glee a saying attributed to the young sovereign: some one having said in her presence, "This is the hour when the king should enter the council with his ministers," "With those of the *late* king," she replied quickly.

"Every one is in ecstasy, every one is wild about you," the empress wrote to Marie Antoinette; "they expect the greatest happiness. You have revived a nation which was in extremity, and which was alone sustained by its affection for its princes." But to her faithful ambassador she was less confident; her political acumen did not allow her to deceive herself concerning the perils of the moment. "The situation of the king, of the ministers, and even of the State exhibits nothing that is reassuring," she said; and with the mysterious presentiment which sometimes illumines the heart of a mother, she added this char-





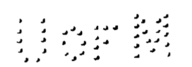
Louis XV.

acteristic phrase concerning the future of her daughter, which events were to justify but too truly, "I fear her happy days are over."

In fact, the intrigues and machinations which had surrounded to the very last the death-bed of Louis XV. were transferred without loss of heat or pertinacity to the foot of the throne of Louis XVI. While the corpse of the old king was being carried in the night, and without pomp or following, to St. Denys, in the midst of the maledictions and insults of the crowd, the courtiers were quarrelling bitterly at Versailles for power and office. "The intrigues of the new court are abominable," the Abbé Baudeau wrote, "and one would have to be more than an archangel to escape them."

Who was to have control? Who was to be prime minister? This was the territory for which the two parties waged war. Mesdames, who, despite all rules of prudence, had followed the royal family to Choisy, — Mesdames, whose influence over their feeble nephew Mercy feared, were, to be sure, separated from the court by the small-pox which they had caught at the bedside of their father; but before being laid low by the malady, Madame Adélaïde had had time to fire a last shot which was to deal a mortal wound to the entire reign: she succeeded in having an uncle of the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Comte de Maurepas, preferred to Choiseul, whom the queen desired, or to Machault, who had first been thought of, or to Sartines, whom the king had sent for during the first hour. And making use with fatal cleverness of the remnants of her influence, which was about to disappear, but to which her devotion during the illness of Louis XV. had given new life, it was through Marie Antoinette herself, who was ignorant and too confiding, that she proposed this choice to Louis XVI. Called to the cabinet of the young monarch as simple adviser, Maurepas came out prime minister, if not in name, at least in fact.

Born in 1701, secretary of state at twenty-four, then dismissed in 1749 for having offended Madame de Pompadour, Maurepas had since that time lived at a distance from the government. He resumed office at the end of twenty-five years, without hesitancy and without concern for the difficulties that had gathered since his fall. Witty and astute, but careless and frivolous, more accustomed to composing songs than to considering serious things, so little serious himself that in order to get on with him

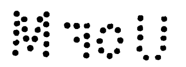


in business it was necessary to assume an air of gayety, a man of expedients rather than a man of principles, less dexterous in solving difficulties than in eluding them, he had but one aim: to assure his repose and that of the king by avoiding all that might frighten the timid good-nature of the young prince. It is asserted that Louis XVI. had called him simply to consult him; his naïve confidence was surprised by the trickery of the old courtier, who was first insinuating and soon imposing. "Your Majesty makes me prime minister, then," Maurepas had said. "No," replied the king, "that is not my intention." "I understand," the old man had answered; "your Majesty wishes me to teach him how to do without one," and he entered the council.

Public opinion was impatient; with that inconsiderate ardour which is too often characteristic of our nation, it desired the dismissal of all who had been in power on the previous day, the recall of the exiles, and the accomplishment of every reform within twenty-four hours. "I am uneasy at this French enthusiasm," Marie Antoinette wrote with great good sense to her mother; "it will be impossible to content every one in a country where they are eager to have everything done in a moment." If the wise and politic heads thought it best to keep the ministers of the late king for a time to finish the business already in hand, and to reflect before making necessary changes, the public, excited by pamphlets and songs, would hear nothing of these delays and these arrangements. It talked of nothing but of hanging the comptroller-general, and the popular refrain sent the chancellor, Maupeou,

"On the route,
On the route,
On the route to Chatou."

Only fifteen days after the accession of Louis XVI., a chronicler, expressing the feverish impatience of the capital, wrote that their great hopes were beginning to cool. On the 2d of June, however, the Duc d'Aiguillon handed in his resignation as secretary of state for foreign affairs, but thanks to his uncle Maurepas, found means to have granted to him a gratuity of five hundred thousand francs, which excited serious discontent. By an act of clemency which was opposed to all ministerial traditions, D'Aiguillon after his dismissal was not exiled; he remained at court, where he used the favour which he had received from his sovereigns against them, and became one of their most im-



placable enemies and one of the most dangerous calumniators of Marie Antoinette.

It was the queen, who, despite Mercy, had effected the dismissal of the Duc d'Aiguillon; but there her power ceased: she was not able to have him replaced by Choiseul. The most that she could obtain was the termination of the exile of the old adversary of Madame du Barry. Moreover, she was obliged to use every means in her power to compass so much. The king seemed as little disposed to recall Choiseul to court as to recall him to the ministry. Though sceptical regarding the absurd rumours of poisoning which had once been current, he could not pardon the ancient minister for the long and violent wrangles which he had had with the dauphin, his father. Perhaps also, as some one has justly remarked, the young prince, who was timid, credulous, and chaste, felt a repugnance to that brilliant mind, which was prompt and adventurous, and to the light manners of him who had expelled the Jesuits. But the queen insisted, even exacted, alleging that it was humiliating not to be able to obtain a favour for the man who had negotiated her marriage. "If you invoke such a reason," Louis XVI. replied, "I can refuse you nothing." Choiseul received permission to quit Touraine and to return to Paris.

He arrived on June 12, in the evening, and betook himself on the 13th to La Muette, where the royal family was stopping; but if the ancient minister flattered himself that he was to resume his power, he was promptly undeceived. The king appeared embarrassed on seeing him. "You have grown fat, Monsieur de Choiseul," he said to him; "you are losing your hair, — you are becoming bald." The queen showered smiles and amiable words upon him in vain. She could not efface the impression produced by such a reception. Despite her amiability, despite the attentions of the princes of the blood and of the ministers, despite the acclamations of the people, the blow had struck home: on Tuesday, the 14th, at eight o'clock in the morning. Choiseul returned to Chanteloup.

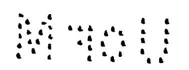
This recall was for Marie Antoinette a question of sentiment rather than of politics. She desired to have Choiseul minister from gratitude, despite her mother, who was not anxious to see so active and vigilant a man at the head of foreign affairs. Choiseul being definitely set aside, she concerned herself little with the person who might succeed the Duc d'Aiguillon. She always exhibited an extreme reluctance to meddle with business.

"She keeps out of it," said some one who knew her well, "both from principle and from inclination." Was it indolence of mind, vivacity of character, or antipathy to serious things? Had she a secret instinct of the danger of taking part in politics that always exists for a woman who is still young, a foreigner by birth, and ill-prepared by her education for any such occupation, at a court given up to faction, like that of Versailles, and amid a discontented and hot-headed people, like the French? Did she say to herself that, save in exceptional circumstances, or when possessed of genius, such as her mother had, and which was given to but few, the part of a queen consisted rather in holding court than in directing affairs, and that that rôle was sufficiently great and sufficiently delicate?

But were not the circumstances exceptional? Was an absolute abstention possible; was it desirable? Among the counsellors of the queen opinion was divided.

Joseph II., whose judgment was often safe where the affairs of others were concerned, wrote anxiously to Leopold, "I hope that all may go well, and, above all, that our sister will have nothing to do with the intrigues of the court. I have written her to this end;" and he added later, "God grant that my advice may be of use and bear fruit; but you observe very truly that to persevere in the determination of abstaining from taking part will not be easy and will require a consistency and exactitude of conduct of which so young a person is scarcely capable. I have preached the necessity of it to her, and perhaps I am the only one who has. I do not guarantee that others whom we respect will preserve the same tenor in their letters."

Joseph II. did not deceive himself; Maria Theresa, who had at first had a presentiment of the dangers which surrounded the young queen, and who had written to Mercy, "I do not write to my daughter but on general subjects, counselling her always to listen to you, to follow your advice, and to be careful not to interfere; that she should be the confidante and friend of the king, but should not seem to wish to govern with him; that she should avoid all applause which excites envy and jealousy against her. Her position is very delicate, and at nineteen! My only hope is in you," — Maria Theresa, on the very day that she addressed these sage reflections to her ambassador, wrote to her daughter in a different tone; she laid out for her a plan of conduct in politics, joining thereto the most lively exhortations on the neces-



sity of strengthening the Franco-Austrian alliance, and that in terms the most likely to move the heart and fire the imagination of the young sovereign: —

"The interests, not only of our hearts, but of our States, are so infinitely bound up in one another, that to further them we must work together on the intimate footing of which the late king sought to lay the foundation, and continue to do so, notwithstanding the various changes that have taken place.

"From my dear children I may well expect as much; any diminution of harmony would kill me. Our two monarchies need repose to arrange our affairs. If we act in concert, no one will disturb our work, and Europe will enjoy happiness and tranquillity. Not only will our people be happy, but also even those who seek a disturbance in the belief that it would be to their personal advantage. The first twenty years of my reign are a proof of this, and since our happy alliance, which has been cemented by so many of the tenderest ties, this peace is beginning to be established. May it continue for many years! Mercy will inform you of all that concerns our affairs in general; I do not leave him in ignorance of anything."

Is this not a distinct avowal that Vienna counted upon guiding the policy on all important points, and that the empress proposed to make her daughter her chief agent at Versailles? Who can doubt it, when two days later, Maria Theresa had a memoir of the Prince von Kaunitz forwarded to Marie Antoinette, which was to serve her as a guide for directing her husband on the various political questions of the day? Was the empress ignorant of the prejudices which the alliance made by Choiseul still aroused in France, and had she already forgotten that after the death of Louis XV., her faithful ambassador was obliged to abstain from appearing at court for some time, in order to escape the untimely and antagonistic remarks which were made concerning the intentions of the cabinet of Vienna to govern that of Versailles?

As for Mercy, though he did not disguise to himself the obstacles which his august pupil would encounter, nor take into exclusive consideration the Austrian policy, as Maria Theresa did, he had always thought that the queen should keep her eyes open to the affairs of France. The more he noted of the feeble, timid, hesitating character of the dauphin since he had become king, the more was he convinced that this character had need of direction, and that he had not sufficient resolution to decide anything

alone, and that he was bound to fall under some one's influence; and that taking it all together, if such were to be the case, it would be better for this influence to spring from his wife than from his aunts or from any one else.

"If during this first period the king allows himself to be governed," the ambassador wrote on the 17th of May, "and the public perceives that Mesdames enjoy this advantage, the credit of the queen will receive a mortal blow. I have implored her to be very circumspect in interfering in affairs, but also not to allow any one of the family to meddle in such matters.

"The king, who has, I believe, some solid qualities, has, however, few amiable ones. His manners are rough; and the details of business excite his temper at moments. The queen must learn to bear with these outbursts; her happiness depends upon it. She is loved by her husband; with moderation, good-nature, and caresses, she can acquire an absolute empire over the king; but she must govern without seeming to wish to govern."

A month later he wrote again: —

"Everything depends on this princess — the queen — being willing to surmount her repugnance to everything serious, on her deigning to listen with attention and to reflect a little upon what is laid before her of this nature. Her natural intelligence and discernment will always make her act rightly, whether with regard to things or circumstances.

"But she must consider these great facts: first, that the king is of a somewhat weak character; second, that consequently some one will take possession of him; third, that under all circumstances the queen must never lose sight for an instant of every means to assure her entire and exclusive ascendancy over the mind of her husband."

The opinion of the second intimate counsellor of Marie Antoinette, Vermond, did not differ from that of Mercy: —

"I desire rather than hope that the queen may listen to and take a sufficient interest in business affairs to support and augment the confidence of her august husband in her. Since he has ascended the throne, he really occupies himself a great deal with them; it is impossible for him to have great confidence in the queen without speaking to her of them, but he will not continue to do so if she does not try to understand them and talk sensibly about them. The queen herself made a very precious observation to me; she feels that she would be unhappy should any disagreement arise between the two courts. 'How could I prevent it,' she said to me, 'if I am never to have anything to do with business?'

"I know well that she must never take part in particular intrigues; but I believe that she should know the principal sources of them. I know, too, that it would be dangerous for her to exercise any daily influence upon details; but to bring her to this point, she would have to change from head to foot, and who could compass that?"

Thus everything urged Marie Antoinette, despite her instinctive repulsion, to concern herself with business; everything, from the character of her husband, who needed to be led, to her mother, who insinuated the necessity of it, while having the air of preaching the contrary, to her daily counsellors, Mercy and Vermond, who at least advised it frankly. Despite their advice and insistence, despite even the remark which she had made to Vermond, her repugnance proved too strong. She feared the complications that might result from circumstances present and to come, and to avoid them she was resolved, at least in the beginning, to hold herself aloof. Her husband, who submitted involuntarily and perhaps unconsciously to her charming nature and character stronger than his own, talked to her gladly of his business affairs, and even consulted her; she listened to him with amiability and attention, but nothing more. When Maupeou and Terray fell before the displeasure of the public, the king did not wish to decide upon their successors without consulting his wife. He sought her in her boudoir and confided to her all the reasons existing for and against the chancellor and comptroller-general. The queen listened, but permitted herself to make no remark. She might have made ministers, as her mother desired; she had no wish to do so.

A question presently arose which belonged to her province and absorbed her attention for the moment.

Court etiquette did not permit the queen or princesses of the blood to eat with men. When the royal couple dined in public, they were served by women. When the king went to the hunt, there was supper for the hunters afterward, from which the queen was excluded. Assemblies of this kind had not a little contributed, so it was said, to plunge Louis XV. into the disorders of his last years and to keep him there. Would they not be a temptation for a prince, who was virtuous, to be sure, but young and feeble; and would the purity of his mind withstand the liberty of language and action which those nocturnal parties seemed to authorize? There was danger; and Marie Antoinette resolved to parry it by realizing a project which she had cherished for a

year, of substituting for these hunting-suppers suppers in society over which she should preside, and to which she would invite the royal family and the principal personages of the court. Mercy encouraged her, and all reasonable persons saw therein the surest means of separating the king from bad companions. But it was necessary to forestall objections. Might not Mesdames, attached from habit and jealousy to the old traditions, and still holding great sway over the mind of their nephew, interdict a scheme which would in their eyes involve a grave breach of etiquette, and give new proof of the influence of their niece? To the first overtures which his wife made to him, the king replied but vaguely, alleging the necessity of consulting Madame Victoire, not to say Madame Adélaïde. Surprised and displeased at these subterfuges, Marie Antoinette insisted, and had a very lively interview with her husband; finally she brought such energy and force of reasoning to bear that she conquered him. Forthwith the first supper was fixed for the following Saturday, October 22. Mesdames were absent; when they returned, the custom was established, and the old princesses had no other resource but to ask permission to assist at these reunions which they had at first disapproved of.

The innovation was favourably received; the public applauded; it understood, as a chronicler said, that it was not for the pleasure of supping in company, but from well-understood political and prudential motives, that the queen had instituted these suppers. At the court their success was not less great. It was soon necessary instead of one supper a week to have two, — on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The king named the gentlemen, the queen the ladies, who were to be invited. Every one schemed for the honour of being invited, and departed enraptured. The queen treated the guests with her ordinary affability, and every day the talk of Paris related some trait of goodness or of condescension. The king himself enjoyed these assemblies, and his brusque nature grew more amiable. Attentive without gallantry to the women, kind without familiarity to the men, he astonished the court by his affable and polished bearing, as well as by his unusual ease; and as usual it was to the queen that they attributed this happy development of the qualities of her husband.

The young princess enjoyed her triumph, and who knows if she did not see in the success of this first innovation encouragement to undertake others and to emancipate herself from the

odious exactions of etiquette? Etiquette, that was her familiar enemy; she encountered it everywhere, during every hour of the day, at every step; it repressed her impulses, spoiled her pleasures, obtruded itself in her friendships. A brief sketch of Marie Antoinette's day at this epoch will show how insupportable was that excessive regulation which left no liberty to any impulse.

The queen usually awoke at about eight o'clock. A woman of the wardrobe then entered, carrying a basket which contained two or three chemises, some handkerchiefs, some towels; this was what was called the "offering" of the morning. The first waiting-woman presented a book, in which were pasted samples of gowns, full dress, undress, etc.; there were ordinarily for each season twelve full toilets, twelve demi-toilets, twelve rich dresses with *paniers*. The queen marked with a pin the garments which she chose for the day,—a full dress, an undress for the afternoon, an evening dress for the play and for the supper. The book of patterns was immediately carried away, and the garments chosen were brought in, in a large taffeta.

The queen took a bath nearly every day; a large tub was rolled into her room, and the bathers were admitted with all the accessories of a bath. The queen wrapped herself in a long robe of English flannel, buttoned to the bottom, and when she came out of the bath a sheet was held very high before her to screen her entirely from the sight of her women. Then she returned to bed clothed in a cloak of white taffeta, and took a book or a piece of embroidery. At nine o'clock she breakfasted; on the days of the bath, in the bath itself on a tray placed upon the lid of the tub; on other days in bed, or sometimes on a little table placed before her sofa. Intimates were then admitted. The breakfast was very simple, consisting of a little coffee or chocolate.

At noon the grand toilet took place. This was the time of the *grandes entrées*. Folding-chairs were wheeled into a circle for the superintendent, the ladies of honour and of the bedchamber, the governess of the Children of France; the princes of the blood, captains of the guard, and all the high officials who had entrance came to pay their court; the ladies of the palace did not come until after the toilet. The queen saluted by bowing her head or by a slight inclination, if it were a prince of the blood; she leaned upon her toilet-table to indicate that she was about to rise. The brothers of the king ordinarily came while her hair was being dressed. The toilet-table, usually very elaborate and very rich,

was drawn to the middle of the room. It was there that the dressing of the body took place. The lady of honour handed her her chemise and poured the water for her to wash her hands; the lady of the bedchamber passed the skirt of her gown or of her full dress, arranged her fichu, and clasped her necklace. It was at this moment that Monsieur Randon of the Tower, on the first of each month, handed to the queen, in a purse of white leather lined with taffeta and embroidered with silver, the money destined for her charities or for her play. Later Marie Antoinette abolished this ceremonial; when her hair was dressed, she saluted the ladies who were in the room, and followed only by her own women, entered her boudoir to dress herself; there she found her modiste, Mademoiselle Bertin, the supreme arbiter of fashion and taste at that period.

Her toilet completed, the queen, accompanied by the superintendent, the ladies of honour and of the bedchamber, the ladies of the palace, her gentlemen-in-waiting, her chief equerry, her clergy, the princesses of the royal family, passed through the Salon de la Paix and traversed the gallery on her way to mass. She heard it with the king in the tribune facing the high altar except on days of full service, when she heard it below on a carpet of velvet fringed with gold.

After mass came dinner. The *maître d'hôtel* entered the chamber of the queen and announced to her that it was served, and handed to her the menu. Every Sunday there was dinner in public, in the cabinet of the nobles. The ladies of title who had the privilege sat on folding-chairs at the two sides of the table; the ladies without title remained standing. The queen dined alone with the king; behind the chair of the king stood the captain of the guard and the first gentleman of the chamber; behind the chair of the queen stood her gentleman-in-waiting, her chief equerry, and her *maître d'hôtel*, who superintended the service without leaving his place. The prince nearest the crown presented a bowl to the king to wash his hands at the moment when he sat down at table; a princess performed the same service for the queen.

Marie Antoinette ate very little, of white meat only, and never drank any wine. At supper she contented herself with a little bouillon, the wing of a chicken, and a glass of water in which she dipped some little biscuits. On leaving the dinner-table, she returned alone to her apartment with her women, took off her *panier*

and the lower part of her robe, and prepared herself for the duties of the evening.

Every detail of her life, even the most intimate, every detail of the toilet, even the form of a bow of ribbon, was thus regulated; each servant had his fixed place, and his service assigned to him beforehand. If the queen, for example, asked for a glass of water, the lackey presented a silver-gilt platter to the first waiting-woman, on which stood a covered goblet and a little carafe; but if the lady of honour appeared, it was she who offered the tray, and if Madame or the Comtesse d'Artois happened to enter at that moment, the tray had to pass from the hands of the lady of honour to those of the princess before reaching the queen. Nothing was passed directly to the sovereign; her handkerchief, her gloves, were laid on a long gold platter or silver-gilt tray called the *gantière*. It was the first woman-in-waiting who thus presented to the queen anything that she needed, provided that a lady of the bedchamber, or lady of honour, or a princess were not present, and always in the same order as observed for the glass of water.

An anecdote related by Madame Campan will give a better idea of all these details, and of the insupportable tyranny of etiquette: —

"One winter day it chanced that the queen, already quite undressed, was on the point of putting on her chemise. I held it all unfolded; the lady of honour entered, hastened to take off her gloves, and took the chemise. Some one scratched at the door. It opened, and Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans appeared; taking off her gloves, she advanced to take the chemise, but the lady of honour could not give it to her; she returned it to me; I gave it to the princess. Some one scratched again; it was Madame la Comtesse de Provence; the Duchesse d'Orléans presented the chemise to her. The queen held her arms crossed over her bosom and appeared to be cold. Madame, observing her painful attitude, contented herself with throwing down her handkerchief, kept on her gloves, and on putting on the chemise disarranged the queen's head-dress. The queen began to laugh to disguise her impatience, but not before murmuring several times between her teeth, 'This is odious! what importunity!'"

This is one among a thousand instances; there was not an act in the life of the princes which was not subjected to this inflexible etiquette. It pursued them in their most secret intimacy, in their pleasures, in their sufferings, in their infirmities. Vanity and personal interest, which are ever alive, learned to make use of

these customs, which transformed the domestic services, even the most humble, into honourable and often lucrative prerogatives; and the highest nobles knew how to advance their fortunes by means of their right to "give a glass of water, to hand a chemise, or to take out a basin." "I should never finish," said the Comte d'Hesecques, "if I recounted all the little things that one must know, not only to be a perfect courtier, but in order not to make mistakes." The lady of honour to the queen, the Comtesse de Noailles, had been brought up with a respect for and knowledge of etiquette, which often made her exaggerate the importance of it. For her a smile contrary to rule was a crime; a bonnet-pin misplaced almost made her fall in a faint. She seemed the personification of etiquette; and in a moment of good or perhaps of ill humour, her royal mistress had given her the nickname of "Madame l'Étiquette," to the great joy of the young court and of the public, but to the great scandal of some old dowagers who would not listen to reason on the subject of ancient traditions.

But how was the queen, with her lively and independent nature, to submit to these perpetual restrictions to which she had not been accustomed from her youth? Had not her mother more than once urged her to emancipate herself from them, and did not her husband encourage a simplicity of manners toward which his own taste disposed him? Everything, then, urged her to shake off the yoke of etiquette; she did so, perhaps too completely. Curtailed of certain puerilities, which were but ridiculous exaggerations, this etiquette was requisite with a people indiscreet and discontented like the French; the mystery with which it surrounded the sovereigns seemed to exalt them, and served to maintain their necessary prestige. Especially necessary was it, a contemporary has remarked, at the very time when it was given up. The unfortunate Louis XVI. recognized this later in an hour sadly solemn, a few days previous to mounting the scaffold, in one of those interviews with his defenders wherein he loved to recall the happier past.

"To live in the society of the favourite," he said, "was derogatory to the dauphiness. Forced to withdraw into a sort of retirement, she adopted a way of life free from etiquette and restraint; she brought the habit of this to the throne. These manners, new to the court, were too much in accord with my natural tastes for me to wish to oppose them. I knew not then how dangerous it is for sovereigns to be seen from too near.

Familiarity destroys respect, with which it is necessary for those who govern to be surrounded. At first the public applauded the abandonment of those old customs; then it looked upon it as a crime."

A few first murmurs, precursors of so many others, made themselves heard when the king and his brothers were inoculated. It was the prince himself who had desired it, but it was an innovation; the public attributed the idea of it to the queen, and were angry with her for it. Inoculation, though customary in the North, was but little known then in France, and did not inspire confidence; it was thought very imprudent for the entire royal family to undergo an experiment of which time had not yet proved the efficacy beyond doubt. It was asserted that the warm season was unfavourable; and every one remembered that small-pox had always been fatal to the Bourbons.

Maria Theresa herself expressed an echo of these complaints and apprehensions to her daughter. Fortunately nothing happened to justify the general uneasiness. Inoculated on Saturday, June 18, the king made no change in his way of living; the eruption took place under the best conditions; at the end of two days the fever passed, and on July 1, Louis XVI. could write gayly to his mother-in-law, —

"I assure you, together with my wife, my dear mamma, that I am quite recovered from my inoculation and that I have suffered but very little. I should ask permission to embrace you if my face were in better condition."

CHAPTER X.

THE NEW MINISTRY. — DU MUY. — TURGOT. — VERGENNES. — RECALL OF THE PARLIAMENT. — MARIE ANTOINETTE, QUEEN OF FASHION AND TASTE. — MADEMOISELLE BERTIN. — THE COIFFURE. — AMUSEMENTS AT COURT. — THE ENTHUSIASM OF HORACE WALPOLE. — MODERATION OF THE QUEEN IN HER TASTES; HER POPULARITY. — REPRESENTATIONS OF GLUCK'S "IPHIGENIA." — GOODNESS OF THE QUEEN. — MESSIEURS D'ASSAS, DE BELLEGARDE, DE CASTELNAU, DE PONTECOULANT. — DISAGREEMENTS IN THE ROYAL FAMILY. — FIRST CALUMNIES. — BEAUMARCHAIS AND THE JEW, ANGELUCCI. — JOURNEY OF THE ARCHDUKE MAXIMILIAN. — QUESTIONS OF PRECEDENCE. — MISTAKES OF THE ARCHDUKE. — THE NICKNAME OF THE "AUSTRIAN." — MARIE ANTOINETTE NO LONGER KNOWS GERMAN.

HIS inoculation had not distracted Louis XVI. from the cares of government. It was with great difficulty that, even during the days of fever, his wife had been able to persuade him not to hold the council, and to abstain from work; but so soon as the success of the operation was assured, he resumed his laborious habits. Desirous of completing his education, he studied with perseverance, and especially the history of France, meditating upon the laws and customs of the kingdom, comparing the course of different reigns, shutting himself up sometimes to run through, in the silence of his work-room, the papers which his father had left him on divers subjects pertaining to the government, reading the best books that appeared on administration and politics, and annotating them with his own hand. He never lost a moment; his rising and toilet did not last an instant; every morning he worked for three or four hours; and in the evening, on his return from the hunt, which continued to be one of his favourite amusements, he again passed a certain time at his desk, or in discourse with his ministers, often retaining their portfolios and not sending them back until the following day, with his observations.

The ministry had finally been formed. On the 5th of June, the Maréchal du Muy and the Comte de Vergennes succeeded to the Duc d'Aiguillon, the former as minister of war, the second as

minister of foreign affairs. On July 14, Turgot replaced De Boynes in the marine. On August 24, Maupeou and Terray were dismissed. Hue de Miromesnil, former president of the Parliament of Rouen, received the seals; Turgot took the general control and left the marine to Sartines. Of all the old cabinet there remained but the Duc de la Vrillière, who was saved from the general overthrow by the protection of his nephew, Maurepas. "Here is a fine St. Bartholomew of ministers," some one remarked on learning the wished-for fall of Maupeou and Terray. "Yes," replied the ambassador from Spain, the Count of Aranda, "but it is not a massacre of the Innocents."

On the following day, when the women of the *halles* came according to custom to felicitate the king on the occasion of the festival of Saint Louis, they said, alluding to his well-known love of the hunt, "Sire, we have come to compliment your Majesty on yesterday's chase; your grandfather never made so good a one."

The new appointments gave satisfaction to the public; they were both a reparation and a promise. The Maréchal du Muy had been the most intimate friend of the dauphin, father of the king; after the fall of Choiseul he had refused the portfolio of war in order not to bend the knee to Madame du Barry. Sartines had made a name for himself as lieutenant of police; and although this office did not seem to fit him specially for the new post confided to him, he was able by his intelligence and activity to impart an impetus to the French marine whose effects were felt in the American war. Turgot had an undoubted reputation among economists. While intendant of Limousin he had made very important reforms, and it is related that when he left that province, where he had made himself so beloved, the curés announced publicly that they should say mass for him, and the peasants left their work to assist at the mass. "He is an honest and enlightened man; that is sufficient for me," the king had said when he had been proposed to him. An honest man, that was the epithet which every one attached to the name of Turgot. "Every one acknowledges that he is upright and honest," Mercy wrote to the Baron de Neny. "He has the reputation of being an honest man," the queen on her side wrote.

The Comte de Vergennes had been ambassador to Constantinople, then to Sweden, during the recent *coup d'état* of Gustavus III. He was a diplomat of the old school, a *gourmet* perhaps,

but a hard worker who had borne himself with distinction in the missions which he had fulfilled; of a moderate disposition, moreover, an enemy to bold ventures, such, in a word, as suited a timorous prince like Louis XVI. Although he had been greatly prejudiced against the Austrian alliance, the queen treated him with great amiability and undertook, in a matter which touched him very closely, since it concerned his wife, to smooth the difficulties relative to the presentation of the Comtesse de Vergennes.

A serious affair of a different nature obtruded itself in the deliberations of the minister, and claimed the decision of Louis XVI. Should the Parliament, exiled by Louis XV., be recalled and re-established, or should they maintain a reform which had been violently accomplished, no doubt, but which from certain points of view — those of politics and justice — offered certain very real advantages? Considering the desire which Louis XVI. felt to gain the affection of his people, the care which Maurepas took to calm public impatience, and the discredit which the pamphlets of Beaumarchais had thrown upon the new Parliament, and the open demand of public opinion, the hesitation of the king and his minister could not be long. The disgrace of Maupeou was, and was bound to be, the signal for the recall of the Parliament. Despite Vergennes and Turgot, they were re-established at the bed of justice held on the 12th of November, 1774, with certain restrictions which seemed good, but which were only irritating. To the eyes of many clear-sighted persons, this was a mistake, and Maria Theresa's good sense was not mistaken. "It is incomprehensible," she said, "that the king and his ministers should destroy the work of Maupeou." It seemed to him possible to recall the members without reconstituting the body, to establish order in the administration of justice without building up a political authority which had so often undermined the royal authority. The Parliament, intoxicated by the popularity which greeted their return, were not long in resuming their old tricks, and their systematic opposition was one of the principal obstacles which rendered ineffective the wise reforms of Turgot and the generous intentions of Louis XVI.

As for the queen, while not desiring to meddle in any way, she could not resist the noise of applause, and the happiness of making others happy. "I have great joy," she wrote, "in thinking that there is no one in exile or misfortune." On the day following this remark, indeed, the princes of the blood were to reap-

pear at the château, the royal mourning was to come to an end, and the queen, for the future assured of the brilliancy of the court, busied herself with trying to make it even more resplendent. Louis XVI., inexpert in all matters of amusement, left to his wife the responsibility of organizing the entertainments for the winter; it was the department which he abandoned to her administration, and Marie Antoinette accepted it with pleasure. Leaving to the monarch and his ministers all business affairs, she limited her efforts to governing the court; it was the only empire for which she felt any ambition. She ruled it with ease, and her decrees were royal; she was the queen of taste, and she wielded the sceptre with a brilliancy and certainty which allowed of no rivalry.

The women of the court, while not possessing her beauty, wished none the less to appear in the same garb. Whatever the young princess adopted became the fashion; from the moment that she affected a colour no one would wear any other. One day she chose a dress of dark-brown taffeta. "It is puce-coloured," said the king; and the dyers busied themselves only with making puce-coloured stuffs of various shades, — old puce, young puce, stomach, back, head, and thigh of puce. Another time the queen wore a satin of a delicate ash-gray. "The colour of the hair of the queen!" Monsieur cried gallantly; and immediately the entire court clothed itself to match; and one sent locks of the amiable sovereign's hair to Lyons and to the Gobelins in order that the exact shade might be copied. Fashion entered the field, and, as always in France, exaggerated fashion, above all, when Mademoiselle Bertin, whom the Duchesse de Chartres had recommended to the queen, became the dictator of it; she became intoxicated by the patronage of her august client, fancied herself a minister, and even forgot herself so far one day as to say to a lady who came to consult her, "Show Madame the patterns of my last work for her Majesty." It was she who developed, in a few years, in Marie Antoinette a love of dress, though her taste had formerly been very moderate, and later was to grow simple again beneath the shades of Trianon.

With the modiste, there was the designer of costumes, Bocquet, whose sketches the dressmaker carried out for the court balls; by the side of Mademoiselle Bertin and Bocquet was the hair-dresser, Leonard. He was not the hair-dresser in title; the hair-dresser in title was called Larseneur; but the latter had neither

taste nor delicacy, and as soon as he was gone, Marie Antoinette, who out of goodness of heart did not wish to dismiss him, called Leonard and had him undo the edifice which had been so awkwardly constructed. With such noble patronage, Leonard soon became the fashion; but he, at least, paid his debt of gratitude by a devotion without bounds, and a fidelity which misfortune could not alter.

Under his influence and that of Mademoiselle Bertin, the head-dresses attained colossal proportions. There was a whole scaffolding of gauze, of flowers and feathers, — of feathers especially, interwoven with the hair, which was crimped, curled, braided, frizzed; a veritable *chef d'œuvre* of imagination and patience. A whole landscape was worn upon the head, a mountain, a meadow studded with flowers, a brook, an English garden, a vessel on the rough sea, etc. The designs and the names for them varied to infinity, from the aigrette, which took its name of *quesaco* from the Memoirs of Beaumarchais, to the coiffure *à l'inoculation* and *au lever de la reine*, to the coiffure *au chien couchant*, or *à l'hérisson*, *à la baigneuse*, *au bandeau de l'amour*, *à la frivolité*, *à la belle poule*, not to forget the bonnets *au Colisée* or *à la candeur*, the hats *à l'anglaise* or *à la Henri IV.*, the toques *à l'espagnolette ;* nor must we forget above all the puff *au sentiment*, in which the Duchesse de Chartres succeeded in picturing her son, the Duc de Valois, in the arms of his nurse, with a little negro page and a parrot pecking at cherries. The dimensions grew to be prodigious, so that the head of a woman, it is said, attained the height of seventy-two inches, and it became necessary to increase the height of the doors in order to allow ladies in full dress to pass through.

The rumours of these extravagances even reached Vienna, with comments and exaggerations, of course, and Maria Theresa became alarmed for her daughter: —

"I cannot help touching upon a point which many of the papers dwell upon but too often. This is the coiffure which you have adopted. They say that from the roots of the hair it rises thirty-six inches, and that feathers and ribbons are on top of this! You know that I have always thought that we should follow the fashion with moderation, and should never exaggerate. A young and pretty queen with many charms has no need of such folly; on the contrary, the simplicity of her adornment will make her seem but the more beautiful, and is better suited to the rank of a queen. It is she who should set the fashion, and every one will hasten to follow

even her trivial changes; but I, who love and follow my little queen at every step, — I cannot forbear warning her against this petty frivolity, though I have, on the other hand, so many reasons to be satisfied and even to be proud of what you are doing."

And the queen immediately replied, "It is true that I busy myself with my adornment; as for the feathers, every one wears them, and it would seem extraordinary not to do so."

Whatever the gazettes may have said, and Maria Theresa thought, the truth is that Marie Antoinette but followed the fashion, and had even tried at times to moderate it. Indeed, the public was not so scandalized as some of the chroniclers would make out, and in a collection of head-dresses published a little later, these rhymes were printed beneath a pretty engraving of the queen in her morning dress: —

"Behold the coiffure of our queen,
Whose perfect taste is therein seen.
'T were well her style to imitate,
Herself in acts both small and great.
For should you copy her good deeds,
You will inspire our love, respect,
And like her, sow the seeds
Of charity towards God's elect."

Whether at Versailles or at Fontainebleau, the success of the young sovereign was brilliant. The apartment in which she held her play, however vast it might be, was always full; at play as at the suppers, whose establishment we have described above, the queen wished that every one should be content with the reception he met with, and she succeeded admirably. "In this respect her Majesty has reached perfection," the scrupulous Mercy wrote. On Jan. 1, 1775, a large number of people, ministers, the chief officials, and more than two hundred ladies betook themselves to Versailles to pay their court, and each one departed filled with respect and gratitude. During the following winter there were representations at Versailles three times a week, two in French and one in Italian; every Monday there was a ball with quadrilles in costume and *contre-danses*. These offered but fresh opportunities for the charming princess to display her grace: strangers or Frenchmen, all alike fell under her charm; it was exaltation, infatuation.

"No one had eyes for any one save the queen," Walpole wrote in the month of August, 1775, at the marriage festivities of Madame Clotilde. "All

the Hebes, Floras, Helens, Graces, are but street-walkers by the side of her. Whether she is standing or sitting, she is the image of beauty; when she moves, it is grace personified. She wore a dress of silver strewn with laurel-rose, few diamonds or feathers. They say that she does not dance in time, but then it is the time that is wrong. . . . In the matter of beauties I saw not one, or else the queen effaced them all."

Three years later the ambassador from Morocco, assisting at one of these court balls, and asked by the Comte d'Artois who among the ladies present seemed to him the most beautiful, the queen excepted, replied gallantly that the restriction imposed by the prince made it impossible for him to answer, which response was very well turned for a barbarian.

What was even more surprising was that these *fêtes* entailed but a very moderate expenditure. Turgot himself found nothing to say against them. The queen had desired that the balls should take place in her own apartment, which gave them a semi-private character, and thus avoided the expenses which more ceremonial balls would have necessitated. She had also given up having the opera brought to Versailles, and decided that when she wished to hear it, she would go to Paris. This was at the time when the comptroller-general, faithful to his celebrated programme, — no bankruptcy, no increase of taxation, no loans, — was beginning his economical reforms. The queen lent herself to them with the greatest good-will, and she did not hesitate to give up any amusements that she feared might become expensive or embarrassing. If later she allowed herself to be led into certain prodigalities, it is the more important to note that at the beginning of her reign such prodigalities were neither in accord with her principles nor her tastes.

The public knew this; it saw with satisfaction their sovereigns setting the first example of economy in their expenditures and restraint in their pleasures. It knew also that the young princess was opposed to the renewal of the monopoly in the commerce of bread-stuffs, which had been established by the Abbé Terray, and which the public had damned with the name of the Famine Compact. It adored her, and Mercy could say with truth that if the authors of the libels which were beginning to appear became known in Paris, nothing could save them from the anger of the people. "Let us avenge our charming queen, of whom this wretch has dared to speak evil and write libels," they had cried, on burning the effigy of the Chancellor Maupeou.

Every appearance of Marie Antoinette in the capital was a veritable triumph; and when on Wednesday, Jan. 13, 1775, she went without equipage to the opera to assist at a performance of Gluck's "Iphigenia," the people gathered in crowds along her route and applauded with enthusiasm. In the second act of the piece the actor who played the rôle of Achilles, instead of reciting exactly the line,

"Sing, celebrate your queen,"

advanced toward the footlights and boxes and sang,

"Oh, let us sing and celebrate our queen!
For Hymen holds her 'neath his laws enchained,
And soon will make us happy evermore."

The entire audience joined in the delicate homage; there were innumerable plaudits and acclamations; the chorus was repeated; and the cries of "Long live the queen!" were so noisy that the performance was interrupted for more than a quarter of an hour. Monsieur, Madame, and the Comte d'Artois, who were in the royal box, were the first to applaud. The queen was so touched by these striking indications of sympathy that she could not restrain her tears; and when she went out, her eyes still shining and wet with tears, she saluted the people with an air so full of emotion, and an affability so moving, that the cries of joy were redoubled.

Marie Antoinette reigned not only by her grace, but by her goodness. She sent relief to the poor, to the wounded, to the victims of fires. She heard that the family of the Chevalier d'Assas, notwithstanding the historical devotion of the captain to the regiment of Auvergne, was living in the country in oblivion and obscurity. She immediately called the brother of the hero to the court and had a company of cavalry given to him. She obtained a new hearing of the case of Messieurs de Bellegarde and de Moustiers, who had been pursued by the spite of the Duc d'Aiguillon; and when their innocence had been established, and the two prisoners, set at liberty, came with their wives and children to thank their benefactress, she replied modestly that justice alone had been done, and that one should congratulate her only on the greatest happiness arising from her position,—that of being able to lay before the king just claims. As a token of gratitude Madame de Bellegarde had a picture painted in which she was represented with her husband kneeling before the queen and car-

rying in her arms her child, from whose head the princess turned aside a suspended blade. The queen was greatly touched, and placed the picture in her apartment. In the same way she protected Lally Tolendal, called him her little martyr, and aided him in his efforts to rehabilitate his father.

The Marquis de Pontecoulant, major-general of the life guards, had, we know not how, displeased the dauphiness during the lifetime of Louis XV. The young princess, greatly incensed against him, had even declared that she should never forget his conduct. When Louis XVI. ascended the throne, Monsieur de Pontecoulant, remembering that he had incurred the displeasure of the new sovereign, placed his resignation in the hands of the Prince de Beauvau, captain of the guards. Marie Antoinette heard of it. "The queen," she said, "does not remember the quarrels of the dauphiness, and it is I who beg Monsieur de Pontecoulant to think no longer of what I have forgotten." After so gracious an insistence his resignation was withdrawn.

Finally, a councillor of the Parliament, Monsieur de Castelnau, from Bordeaux, who had fallen madly in love with Marie Antoinette, and pursued her everywhere with his declarations and importunities, was sentenced to imprisonment; the queen, though greatly incensed at the unfortunate man, intervened. "Let him annoy me," she said, "but do not let him be deprived of the happiness of being at liberty."

She had other enemies. On the day following her accession, and in her own family, she encountered opposition and jealousy. The Comte and Comtesse de Provence, the Comte and Comtesse d'Artois, instigated in secret by Mesdames, refused to go each morning to pay their court to the king and queen as etiquette required. Louis XVI., with his excessive good-nature, did not wish that his brothers should address him as "your Majesty;" Marie Antoinette, always kind too, often too kind, allowed the same simplicity in her relations with her brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. Maria Theresa was uneasy at this, and with her German roughness reprimanded her daughter for this condescension. "You must keep your place," she wrote her, "and know how to play your part; in that manner you will put yourself and every one else at ease. Every condescension and consideration to every one, but no familiarity, no gossip. You will thus avoid annoyances." The fears of the empress were soon realized. On public occasions, when the royal family were as-

sembled, there was such an appearance of equality among the three princes that a stranger could not have distinguished the king from his brothers. The Comte d'Artois especially, who was always petulant, affected a shocking familiarity. The Comte de Provence, who was more diplomatic, did not make himself so conspicuous, but worked in secret. More ambitious than ever on seeing at the end of four years no heir presumptive to the throne appear, he aspired to enter the council of State, where he counted on playing an important part, and he blamed the queen for the defeat of his pretensions. Madame Adélaïde, always bitter and envious, had not forgiven her niece for the diminution of her influence. Maurepas and his wife, jealous of a power which threatened them, allied themselves to their nephew, D'Aiguillon, who was still smarting from his fall, and who used his knowledge of the court and the connections he had kept there to further his personal spite. Hence arose underhand manœuvres, injurious songs, and cynical verses; it would seem as though the hidden object of the enemies of the queen was to ruin her in public estimation and in the affection of her husband, to the end, perhaps, of having the young woman, whose beauty provoked comparison and whose virtue seemed a rebuke, sent back to Germany.

When the ladies of the court made their courtesies of mourning after the death of Louis XV., the queen allowed herself to smile, not at the antiquated costume of certain venerable dowagers, but at a witticism made at their expense by the Marquis de Clermont-Tonnerre. Immediately the makers of couplets set themselves to work; and on the following day the echoes of Versailles repeated this insulting refrain, which but too plainly betrayed the secret intentions of the conspirators: —

"Little queen of twenty,
You who treat us badly,
You shall cross again the barrier,
Laire, laire, lan laire."

When, after the inoculation of the king and his brothers, the court for the first time was transferred to Marly, Marie Antoinette, wishing to enjoy the pure air of a beautiful summer night, expressed a desire to see the sun rise. She spoke to her husband of it; the king consented willingly, but being accustomed to going to bed at a fixed hour, did not care to sacrifice his sleep

"Austrian," invented by the jealousy of Madame Adélaïde, passed from mouth to mouth, summarizing in this word, suited to catch the popular imagination, the accusation against the queen of sacrificing everything to her country and family.

And yet no accusation was ever more unjust. Without entering here into the details which we shall take up later, it is sufficient to recall that upon twenty different occasions Maria Theresa reproached Marie Antoinette for forgetting her country and family, for losing its traditions and customs, even its awkwardnesses, for being almost ashamed of being German, for neglecting the Germans, for showing them "little cordiality or protection." "German blood runs in your veins," she cried in her semi-German speech; "do not be ashamed of it." Joseph II. addressed to his sister the same reproaches as her mother; he found her too French. When Maximilian and Rosenberg went to Versailles, he wished to recommend them to speak only German to her. Hindered in this project, whose realization, it must be said, would have been a supreme breach of etiquette, he had written the queen a letter in German; and this woman, who is accused of having heart and thought only for her native country, had so far forgotten her mother tongue that she was obliged to get Mercy to translate the emperor's letter, to such a degree had she lost the habit, not only of speaking German, but of reading it, writing it, and understanding it. Yet this could not stop calumny, nor hinder the courtiers from maliciously calling Trianon "Little Vienna."

CHAPTER XI.

Coronation of the King. — Celebrations at Rheims. — Emotion of the Queen; her Letter to the Empress. — Marriage of Madame Clotilde.— Renewed and Vain Efforts to recall Choiseul. — Trial of the Comte de Guines. — Exile of the Duc d'Aiguillon. — Nomination of Malesherbes. — Reforms of Turgot; Complaints which they Aroused. — Fall of Turgot.—The Share which the Queen had in it. — Letter of Mercy to Maria Theresa.

ON June 5, 1775, Louis XVI. left Versailles, accompanied by the queen, Monsieur, Madame, and the Comte d'Artois, on his way to Compiègne, where he arrived at ten o'clock in the evening. On the 8th he left Compiègne to sleep at Fismes; on the 9th he took the road to Rheims. He went there to receive the benediction of his crown, and the solemn consecration of the title which he held from his ancestors, and the visible sign of that grace of God in the name of which he reigned. The coronation was, in France, a national tradition; the people found in the oaths which the monarch took a recognition of his rights; and if certain philosophers like D'Alembert and Condorcet, carried away by their sceptical passions, only saw in it "a bizarre and absurd ceremony," entailing " the most useless as well as the most ridiculous of useless expenditures," personages not less celebrated, and whom we cannot accuse of superstition, like Mirabeau, wrote, "The grandest of all events for a people is without doubt the inauguration of their king. It is then that Heaven consecrates our monarchs and strengthens in some way the ties that bind us to them."

Mercy would have wished to have the queen crowned at the same time as the king. It seemed to him that under the circumstances, and Marie Antoinette not being a mother, the divine blessing would give her in the eyes of the nation the aureole with which maternity had not surrounded her.

A *brochure*, written by a priest of the oratory, proved that the consecration of the queens had been a constant custom to the time of Marie de Médicis, and that if it had fallen into desuetude it was only because neither Louis XIII. nor his successors had been married at the time of their coronation. Mercy, who, if he were not the instigator of this *brochure*, was at least the ardent propagator of it, got Vermond to talk to the queen, and took care that the manuscript was given to the Duc de Duras, and by the Duc de Duras to the king. But the queen remained sufficiently indifferent to the overture, and the king did not seem affected by it. Did his affection for his wife have to contend against considerations of economy, which had already deferred the ceremony for a year? Or was it circumvented by Maurepas, incessantly on guard against anything that might strengthen the power of the young sovereign? However that may be, Marie Antoinette was present only as a spectator at the coronation of her husband. While the king made his entrance in a coach eighteen feet high, received from the hands of the Duc de Bourbon, governor of Champagne, the keys of the city, and was himself received by the archbishop of Rheims at the door of the cathedral, where was solemnly chanted the *Te Deum*, the queen left Compiègne in the evening of the 8th with only Monsieur, Madame, and the Comte d'Artois, and arrived incognito in the city of the coronation at one o'clock in the morning. But in default of official compliments, she received popular acclamations. On one of those beautiful moonlight nights when the silver light is particularly luminous and soft, an immense crowd congregated on the highways and at the gates of the city to witness the arrival of the wife of the king. The enthusiastic *vivats* greeting her passage alone broke the silence of the night, which filled the soul with peace, and with sweet and pure emotions. On the following morning, in despite of the incognito, all the nobility of the city and surrounding country thronged the apartments of the archbishop's palace, where the queen was lodged, and departed enraptured with the grace and amiability of the young sovereign. In the afternoon there was a similar ovation; it was to the cries of "Long live the queen!" that she traversed the streets of Rheims on her way to the intendance, to witness the entrance of the king; and in the evening the clergy and the *corps de ville* came to offer her an address, to which she replied with discretion and amiability.

On Sunday, the 11th, at six o'clock in the morning, the canons, in their copes, entered their stalls in the choir of the basilica; they were soon followed by the archbishop, the cardinals, the ministers, etc. At half-past six the lay peers took their places. At seven o'clock, the king, led by the bishop-duke of Laon and the bishop-count of Beauvais, arrived at the cathedral. After being addressed on the threshold by the Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon, who felicitated him on having all the virtues, and in particular the love of order, he entered the ancient edifice to the noise of popular acclamations; and the archbishop, after having administered to him the oath on the Book of the Gospels, poured on his head, breast, and shoulders some drops of the holy oil, which had been solemnly carried from the Abbey of St. Remy by the grand prior, wearing a coat of cloth-of-gold, and mounted upon a white horse covered with a housing of cloth-of-silver richly embroidered. The king was then invested with the royal cloak, and received from the hands of the archbishop the crown, the sceptre, the *main de justice*, and the sword of Charlemagne. Then, followed by the peers and high officials, he was conducted to the throne, raised upon the rood-loft; after which the archbishop and the peers gave him the kiss of peace, saying, "*Vivat rex in æternum.*" The multitude who filled the galleries echoed these words. Immediately the doors were thrown open, and the people pressed into the basilica with cries of joy.

The queen, from the tribune, followed all the phases of the ceremony. At the moment of the crowning and throning, touched to the heart by the beauty of the church rites, and still more by the popular acclamations, which interrupted the order of them and emphasized the details, she could not control herself, and shed abundant tears. Her emotion was so great that for a moment she was obliged to leave her place. When she reappeared an instant later, her eyes still wet with tears, the king looked at her affectionately, and a visible air of content spread itself over his face. Despite the holiness of the place, the church resounded with cries and clapping of hands. All present were touched, and tears ran from many eyes, which caused those of the queen to flow afresh.

Louis XVI. had forbidden them to drape the streets along his route, in order, he said, to see and be better seen by his people. On the very day of the coronation, at seven o'clock in the evening,

the king, with the queen on his arm, went in his ordinary costume, and without other following than the captain of the guards and a few police officers, to walk in the long wooden gallery which served as passage between the archbishop's palace and the church. There were many people in the gallery, and a great many without. The king forbade them to drive any one out, or to hinder any one from approaching. The populace, happy and grateful, pressed about the royal couple, from whom they were only separated by a low balustrade. During more than an hour the king and queen remained thus lost in the crowd, responding with great grace to their demonstrations, allowing themselves to be addressed and looked at, and showing to each one marks of kindness. It was the queen who had first suggested this promenade; the public knew it, and thanked her for it by their acclamations.

When we think that these popular acclamations were manifested in the midst of universal contempt; that bread was dear; that the reform measures of Turgot, adroitly used by his enemies, had excited uneasiness on all sides; and that two months before, riots had broken out at Dijon, at Versailles, and at Paris, — we do not know which to admire the more under the circumstances, the obstinate attachment of the nation to its princes, which might have been so great a power in the hands of clever ministers, or that incredible fickleness of the French character which passes so easily from enthusiasm to anger, and which with young and inexperienced sovereigns like Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, with light-minded ministers like Maurepas, or one who disdained obstacles like Turgot, became so formidable a danger. The queen did not hide it from herself, and if her happiness were complete, her confidence was not without alloy.

"It is a very astonishing thing, and a fortunate one at the same time," she wrote to her mother, "that we should have been so well received two months after the revolt, and despite the dearness of bread, which unfortunately continues. It is a marvellous trait in the French character to allow itself to be so easily carried away by evil suggestions, and to return to the good so quickly. Truly, in seeing these people, who in their misfortune have treated us thus well, we are the more obliged to work for their good. The king seemed to me to be penetrated by this truth. As for me, I know that I shall never forget the day of the coronation during my whole life, if it should last two hundred years. My dear mamma, who is so good, would have shared our happiness."



The ceremony lasted four days. On the 12th the regiment of hussars of the Comte Esterhazy went through some manœuvres at a short distance from the city, which the queen and Madame witnessed. On the 13th the king was solemnly made grand master of his order, and afterward held the chapter. On the 14th, according to an ancient custom, he betook himself on horseback to the Abbey of St. Remy, there heard mass, and on leaving the church, touched more than two hundred sick persons in the park, to whom he ordered alms to be distributed. The queen went to a private house to witness the passage of the procession. In the evening the young couple drove in a carriage, amid the *vivats* of the people, round a beautiful promenade which encircled the city. But it was everywhere the queen who attracted attention. "She has borne herself on every occasion," Mercy wrote, "with dignity, amiability, and grace; and if the homage which has been rendered to her has been extraordinary and universal, it is certain that never was homage better deserved."

On the 16th the court returned to Compiègne; on the 19th, to Versailles.

New festivals there awaited them. On February 12, the king had announced the marriage of his sister Clotilde to Charles Emanuel of Savoy, prince of Piedmont, oldest son of the king of Sardinia. On August 21, the marriage was celebrated in the chapel of the château. There was a public dinner, games of chance, a ball at the court, and a ball at the house of the Comte de Viry, ambassador from Sardinia. With what brilliancy the queen appeared at these *fêtes*, Walpole has told us in a letter which we have quoted above. There was on seeing her a general cry of admiration.

On the 28th Madame Clotilde said farewell to her French family and set out for Turin. Her departure was no great grief to the queen. For a time while she was still dauphiness, she had been sufficiently intimate with her young sister-in-law, whose sweet and kindly nature she appreciated; she had been present at balls in her apartment, or at representations of small comedies, which had been an amusement and had served to complete their education. But their intimacy had not lasted long. Soon, under the influence of her governess, Madame de Marsan, who was in name and heart "her dear little friend," the young princess had become estranged from her royal sister-in-law. After the death

of Louis XV. Madame Clotilde had lived apart, and her marriage left no void at the court. We should say rather that it was a relief to Marie Antoinette, as it put an end to the duties of Madame de Marsan, and thus diminished the importance of a woman who had always shown herself, and still showed herself, one of her most implacable and dangerous enemies.

The queen at that time, moreover, was preoccupied with other things. At the instigation of the friends of Choiseul, with whom she was surrounded, and despite her mother, who feared for the Austrian policy the activity and clear-sightedness of the former minister, she was contemplating having him recalled to court. At the time of the consecration, Choiseul, in the rank of chevalier of the orders of the king, had gone to Rheims, and the queen had granted him an audience. She had done more; and with feminine diplomacy, which she boasted of in a regrettable letter to the Count von Rosenberg, and which drew upon her the just reproaches of Maria Theresa, she had found means to make Louis XVI. himself fix the hour of the audience. The affair was soon known to the public, and the reinstatement of Choiseul in the council was looked for. He himself affected an air of confidence; "he sniffed the air," as a chronicler has said, "in a way characteristic of his audacious genius." "I dare say," Marie Antoinette wrote on her part, "that old Maurepas was afraid of being sent to take a little rest at home." But was such indeed the intention of the young sovereign?

Had she not wished simply to bestow a mark of public favour on the man who had negotiated her marriage? Had she not contemplated asking advice from a man to whom no one denied intelligence, or did she put such confidence in him that she wished to further his views? If such were her intention, her plan failed. The king persisted in his coldness and in his dislike; the queen herself was sufficiently ill pleased with her interview, in which Choiseul showed himself to be selfish rather than loyal, and refused to lend herself to certain of his insinuations, and the fallen minister returned to his retirement never to leave it again.

The queen, nevertheless, continued to be surrounded by the friends of Choiseul, to submit to their influence, and to espouse their quarrels; it would seem as though she regarded this as a debt of gratitude. She had lately given a striking proof of this to the eyes of all, in the trial of the Comte de Guines. This Comte de Guines, ambassador to London, after having been min-

ister to Berlin, — a man of intelligence, amiable, but ambitious and unprincipled, an intimate friend of Choiseul, — had been accused of smuggling into England under cover of his ambassador's franks, and of having speculated at the Bourse by means of information which he had received from his official position. He threw all the blame upon his secretary, Tort de la Sonde; but the latter proved that he had acted only under the command of his chief. The case was carried before the Parliament of Paris; it was an event. "Every one is interested in this affair, — some from friendship, others from curiosity," wrote Madame du Deffand, who was not less interested than every one else. The Duc d'Aiguillon, incidentally involved in the debate, used all his power against Monsieur de Guines, who, on the other hand, was supported by all the friends of Choiseul. It was correspondence against correspondence, requisition against requisition, memoir against memoir. The queen, won over by those around her, declared for the ambassador, and did so with all the passionate ardour she brought to her friendships. The Comte de Guines had thought it necessary for his justification to insert in the memoirs written in his favour certain passages from his former ministerial correspondence. Monsieur de Vergennes refused to allow him to do so, alleging that if he granted any such demand, the secrecy necessary in the affairs of State would be violated, and that no foreign minister would again dare to make confidential communications to the ministers of France. The council unanimously upheld the decision of Vergennes; but the queen, urged by her friends, used such persuasion with the king that, despite this vote, the permission solicited was granted. A little later, a memoir of the Comte de Guines having been suppressed by a decree of the council of State as libellous against the Duc d'Aiguillon, the king, at the instigation of the queen, nevertheless sent word to the ambassador that he might make use of the memoir which had been suppressed, and to the judges that they should give heed to it. Finally, in the beginning of June, 1775, the case was adjudged; Tort de la Sonde was sentenced as calumniator to make honourable reparation to his former chief before twelve witnesses, and the ambassador returned in triumph to take possession of his post.

At the same time the Duc d'Aiguillon, who had made great preparations to go to Rheims as captain of the light horse, was forbidden to be present at the coronation, and was ordered to retire to his estates of Guyenne.

"This departure is altogether my work," Marie Antoinette wrote to the Count von Rosenberg. "The measure was full; that wicked man had maintained all sorts of espionage and evil report. He had sought to brave me more than once in this affair of Monsieur de Guines; immediately after the sentence I requested his withdrawal of the king. It is true that I did not ask for a *lettre de cachet*, but nothing is lost; for instead of remaining in Touraine, as he wished, he has been requested to continue his route as far as Aiguillon, which is in Gascony."

The king had not shown any reluctance to exile the Duc d'Aiguillon, who was in his eyes the last representative of the odious cabal of Madame du Barry. This interference of the queen in the quarrels of the court was none the less to be regretted; it made her descend from her serene throne, from the height of which a sovereign should soar above all party factions, to throw the weight of her name and personality into the struggles of every day; she made adversaries of all the enemies of her friends. This first step was to carry her further, to an action more serious and more grievous; after having made the mistake of taking part in this trial, she was to make the more serious mistake of interfering between the king and his ministers.

The progressive cabinet, of which the appointment of Turgot had been the signal and the beginning, was finally completed by the nomination of the Comte de Saint-Germain in the place of the Maréchal du Muy, who had died in frightful agony, and of Malesherbes in the place of the detested Duc de la Vrillière. "Although he is hard of hearing," Marie Antoinette wrote jestingly of this latter, "he has none the less heard that it was time for him to go before the door was shut in his face."

The public applauded these appointments, and the queen either had no share in them, or had herself approved them. She had desired Sartines rather than Malesherbes; and it is certain that the talents of the former lieutenant of police seemed to fit him for that place in the household of the king. But after her first impulse of anger she had made the best of it, and had received the new minister graciously; she had lent herself with the greatest good-will to the reforms of Turgot. She herself, at the beginning of her reign, had urged economy in the maintenance of the court, had forbidden gold and silver ornaments, and consented, without the least difficulty, to the reductions made in her household; she had even, it was said, approved of the changes which the Comte de Saint-Germain had made in the



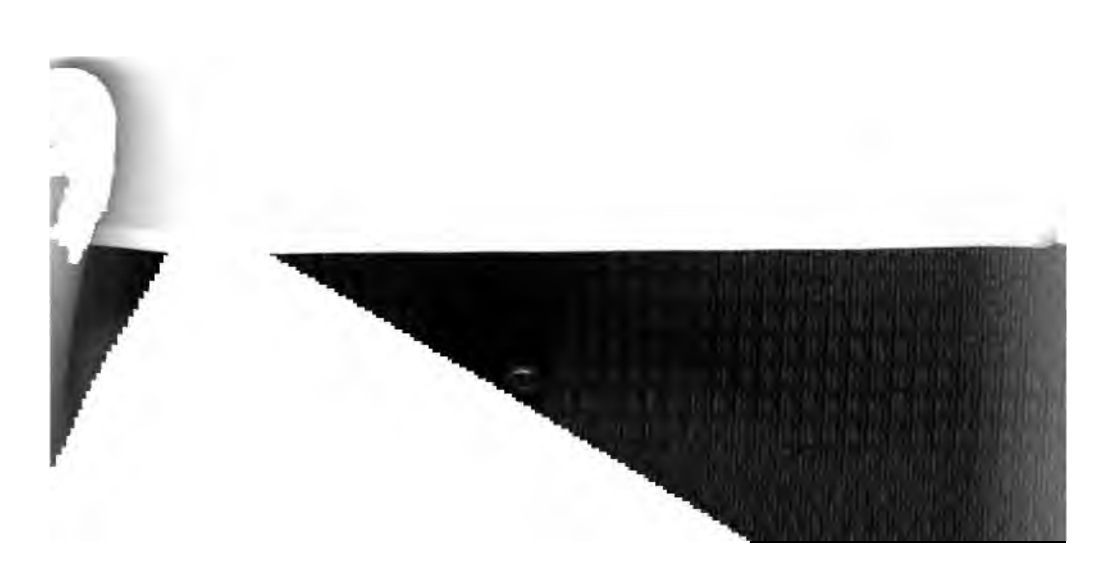
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Princesse de Lamballe.



There were, first, horse-races, — a new pleasure recently imported from England. Anglomania was then the fashion. In spite of the cutting reply which Louis XV. had made to the Comte de Lauraguais, many of the young nobles, like the Comte d'Artois, the Duc de Chartres, the Duc de Lauzun, the Marquis de Conflans, were eager to introduce English customs into France. The first race took place on March 9, 1775, on the plain of Sablons; a horse belonging to the Duc de Lauzun carried off the prize. The queen was present, "beautiful as the day," as Matra said, and the day was superb; she came with Monsieur, Madame, and the Comtesse d'Artois. Other races followed this, then became a regular amusement, which took place every week in the environs of Paris, and for which the young sovereign acquired an "extraordinary taste;" but this amusement was not without its drawbacks. The freedom of the races authorized a reprehensible familiarity. A sort of platform had been raised for the queen, whence she overlooked the track; here the principal amateurs gathered; and these amateurs, carried away by their ardour, did not always preserve that form which was proper. They entered the pavilion in boots and morning dress, to the horror of serious-minded people. There would be a whole troop of young people there, "improperly dressed," as Mercy said, making such confusion and noise that one could not hear one's self speak, and in the midst of them the royal family, almost lost in the crowd, without any distinction whatsoever, — the Comte d'Artois running up and down, betting, lamenting noisily when he lost, giving way to a joy not less noisy when he won, darting down among the people to encourage the postilions or jockeys, and returning to present to the queen the one who had won the prize. The queen might try in vain to preserve in the midst of this promiscuous crowd an air of dignity which would lessen the impropriety of the procedure; the public was unable to appreciate so fine a distinction, and only saw the familiarity which seemed to preclude respect. The king had not been able to bring himself to witness more than one of these diversions; he did not dissemble his displeasure, and the queen herself was sensible of the impropriety of these English importations; but led on by her ardour, she did not always make her conduct accord with her sentiments.

At other times there were cabriolet-races, or deer-hunts in the Bois de Boulogne with the Comte d'Artois. The hunt ended

with a dinner in a house in the wood. The queen undoubtedly was never present at these repasts, which public rumour censured as too gay. However, they saw her in Paris driving with her brother-in-law in the little open carriages in which the count drove himself, and every one regretted that she should associate herself so openly in the pleasure-parties of a prince whose frivolity was so severely condemned.

The year 1776 brought other diversions. The winter was exceptionally severe; snow covered the ground for more than six weeks. Marie Antoinette, who recalled the pleasure she had taken in her youth in sleighing, wished to enjoy that amusement once more. It was by no means a novelty at the court of France: in the stables at Versailles were found old sleighs that had been used by the dauphin, father of Louis XVI.; but new ones were made, more appropriate to the fashions of the day, and the queen, accompanied by the Princesse de Lamballe, both of them charming in the furs that enveloped them, glided over the ice with the chief lords and ladies of the court. She hesitated to go to Paris, she said, "for fear of being annoyed by fresh scandal." The first excursions were made in the park at Versailles; the sound of the sleigh-bells which ornamented the harness of the horses, the elegance and whiteness of their plumes, the variety in the form of the various sleighs, the gilt with which they were decorated, all combined to make a charming spectacle for the on-looker. This success was encouraging; they pushed on to the Bois de Boulogne; once they went as far as Paris, traversing the boulevards and some of the streets. As the ground was slippery and covered with frost, and likely to occasion many falls, Marie Antoinette, from kindness of heart, had desired not to be escorted by her guards; but the public, not understanding her humanitarian motive, and being accustomed to see their sovereigns surrounded by pomp and magnificence, regarded Marie Antoinette's too simple equipage as a crime. The queen knew it: in the following years she seldom went sleighing; and when, in 1778, she returned once to Paris, it was with a numerous suite, in excellent order, and accompanied by the whole court in twenty-one sleighs.

The queen loved Paris; she loved its spectacles, its diversions. It pleased her to take part in them; and the Parisians, in the beginning at least, were delighted by her frequent appearances, as they kept the actors on the alert and forced them to perfect

their art. The queen went to the Colisée with Monsieur, without diamonds or head-dress, and allowed herself to be approached by every one, and the public applauded. She went to the Palais Royal to a fancy-dress ball given by the Duc de Chartres; but this time the public complained: it was not the custom for the queen to accept an invitation to a ball given at the house of the Duc d'Orléans. The king had given her permission to go, although he would not go himself. In particular the queen went to the balls at the opera. These were then the meeting-place for people of fashion; the nobles and the ladies of the court assembled there in domino and amused themselves by mystifying one another. Marie Antoinette took great pleasure in this herself. "In order not to be known," the Prince de Ligne relates, —"which she always was, both by us and by all Frenchmen, even those who knew her least,—she addressed herself to foreigners, in order to puzzle them, hence a thousand adventures and a thousand lovers, English, Russian, Swedish, and Polish."

The queen never went alone to these balls; she was always accompanied either by her suite or more usually by the princes or princesses of the royal family. An officer of the guards remained near her; one of her ladies was by her side; and if it happened that she walked for an instant with a man, it was always with a person of distinction. The king appeared but rarely at these balls; and while he encouraged his wife to enjoy such amusements, he seldom took part in them. On one occasion Madame, with her Italian cunning, pretended at the last moment to be indisposed, in order not to go with her sister-in-law. The queen then went with Monsieur, and the public cavilled; they spared the young princess neither malicious criticisms nor direct reproaches. On another, a mask was bold enough to approach her and blame her laughingly for failing in her duty as a good wife, who should remain at home with her husband and not go to balls without him. The freedom of this sort of entertainment gave rise to inconveniences which might have passed unnoticed in another country, but which, Mercy rightly declared, were to be feared in conjunction with the lightness and frivolity of the French.

One day at the opera the queen wished to go about in the crowd; in order not to betray her incognito, she ordered the chief of her guard to follow her at a distance of ten steps, and she advanced with Monsieur and the Duchesse de Luynes. A

mask in a black domino brushed roughly against Monsieur, who pushed him aside with his fist. The mask complained to a sergeant, who was about to arrest the prince, when the officer explained who he was. This incident, very simple in itself, gave birth to the most ridiculous stories. The most ordinary circumstances were immediately travestied, and seldom with good-will.

"The absurdity of the lies that are told here about everything is beyond belief," Mercy wrote. The persons who had no other means of livelihood but writing pamphlets filled them with a mass of anecdotes, invented at pleasure for the most part, but which, finding a semblance of truth in the excursions to Paris and appearances at the balls, gained credence in the salons and assured the circulation of the leaves abroad. The scandal-mongers delighted in them; and thus grew up about the name of Marie Antoinette an evil legend, which, propagated by court hatred, nourished by pamphlets, repeated in the memoirs of her implacable enemies, and exaggerated by party passion, has been handed down to us, and is even yet, despite the clearness of the truth and our knowledge of history, hardly dissipated, — so difficult is it to destroy calumny in France.

What has not been said, for example, about the adventure of the cab, as it is called? Here is the adventure in all its simplicity: —

It was in 1779, three years after the incident we have just related; the queen still retained her taste for the balls at the opera, and the king had come to share it. The two had gone together on the evening of Shrove Sunday to the ball, and after remaining till morning in the ball-room without being recognized, had returned to Versailles alone together. They had planned to return to the opera on the following Tuesday. Then at the last moment the king had changed his mind and persuaded the queen to go alone with one of her ladies of honour. The queen consequently set out alone with the Princesse d'Henin. On arriving in Paris she went to the house of her first equerry, the Duc de Coigny, to take a private carriage, which would the better protect her incognito, and in this equipage she proceeded toward the opera. Unfortunately the carriage was old; it broke down at some distance from the opera. The queen descended with her lady of honour, entered the house of a silk merchant without unmasking, to wait while some one went in search of another carriage, and when none could be found, got into a cab which was passing, and thus

arrived at the opera. Some of her suite who had gone on ahead joined her and did not leave her again as long as she remained at the ball, where she was not recognized. Such is the story of the cab, according to the best-informed witnesses. The queen was somewhat disturbed by it, but the king only laughed and made it a subject of pleasantry; the pamphleteers alone, lovers and inventors of scandal, contrived to turn it into calumny.

It is none the less true that these visits to Paris, these appearances at the balls at the opera, were productive of real inconvenience. The queen, strong in the testimony of her conscience and purity of her intentions, only saw therein an innocent pleasure and a diversion without consequence. Mercy judged more clearly when he made some serious observations to the young princess on the subject of these frivolous pastimes. They were indeed but insignificant errors, but they made an unfortunate impression. The queen, with her native benevolence and easy affability, talked to every one; and there resulted an appearance of familiarity which somewhat compromised her dignity and shocked the public, unaccustomed to such behaviour. One grew accustomed little by little, even in the most solemn functions and with the best intentions, to ignore the high rank of the sovereign, who seemed to wish to forget it herself. Familiarity killed respect. "Ever more jealous of her sex than of her rank," Rivarol has rightly said, "she forgot that she was born to live and die upon a real throne; she was too desirous of enjoying that fictitious and fleeting empire which beauty gives to ordinary women, and which makes them queens of a moment."

We must not, however, blame the queen alone for these imprudences. Louis XVI. should bear his share of the responsibility, which was, perhaps, greater than hers. Head of the family and of the State, it was for him to realize the harm that these visits to Paris might do his wife; it was for him to warn her of it, and, if need were, to forbid these diversions, innocent in themselves there is no denying, but which laid her open to criticism. He did not do so; far from that, not only did he sanction these amusements, but he was the first to urge Marie Antoinette to enjoy them; and when Maria Theresa, alarmed for the reputation of her daughter by the rumours which arrived from Paris, echoed from Vienna the severe observations of Mercy, and wrote that these amusements, "wherein the dear queen appeared without her sisters-in-law and the king, caused her many anxious mo-

ments," the young woman had the right to reply that the king knew and approved of them, and that she could not do wrong in yielding to the instances of her husband.

"Among the rumours which are spread to detract from the honour and consideration essential to the queen of France," Mercy wrote on Dec. 17, 1776, "there is one which is more dangerous and more unfortunate than all the others. It is dangerous, because from its nature it must make an impression on all classes of society, and particularly on the people; it is unfortunate, because after deducting all the lies and exaggerations inseparable from public rumour, there remain nevertheless many very authentic facts to which it would have been better if the queen had never given any pretext. The queen is censured quite publicly for making and being the occasion of considerable expenditures. This cry will continue and increase if the queen does not immediately adopt some principle of moderation on this article. It only began after the death of the late king; but it has already grown to great dimensions."

Strange that Marie Antoinette as dauphiness had never shown any taste for extravagance! She had even seemed rather to lean toward a somewhat strict economy. "There is no instance," the ambassador wrote, "when Madame the Dauphiness has of her own accord exhibited any marked liberality." A year later he again observes with chagrin that "Madame the Archduchess has never given any indication of a disposition toward generosity," and he asks himself, not without uneasiness, to what use he can put the thousand louis which the empress had authorized him to put at the disposition of her daughter. When she ascended the throne, Marie Antoinette could with justice boast of never having made any debts. At the beginning of her reign she had shown herself resolute to avoid all useless and superfluous expense, and she had given up without regret amusements which were likely to become expensive and embarrassing. Soon, however, dazzled by her new grandeur, and led on by her friends, she threw herself into the vortex of pleasures and luxury. As dauphiness she had spent little on her dress; and though she loved jewels, we have seen her refuse the diamond ear-rings which Madame du Barry offered to persuade Louis XV. to buy for her. Once upon the throne, her taste for stones asserted itself forcibly and irresistibly. In January, 1776, she bought some *girandoles* worth four hundred thousand francs, and it was necessary to ask the merchant for a delay of four years to pay the full price. Six months later she bought bracelets at two hundred and fifty thousand

livres. "This purchase," Mercy said, "was determined upon because certain persons about the queen tempted her, and because of her protection granted to certain jewellers." But this time her purse, already drained by the acquisition of the *girandoles*, was wholly insufficient. It was necessary to meet the deficit; some jewels were sold; then the queen with extreme repugnance decided to demand two thousand louis from her husband. The king made some remarks, but gave her the sum. Maria Theresa was less patient; she addressed some lively reproaches to her daughter.

"These anecdotes cut me to the heart, above all, for the future," she wrote to her, in her vigorous and incorrect style. "That relating to the diamonds humiliated me. This French frivolity and passion for all these extraordinary ornaments! My daughter, my dear daughter, the first queen, is she to grow to be like this? The idea is insupportable to me."

The queen was piqued by these reproaches. "So my bracelets have reached Vienna," she said angrily, on reading her mother's letter. "I wager that this information came from my sister Marie." Not knowing what to reply, she affected to turn the affair into a jest, and treated the purchase of the bracelets as a trifle. The empress replied warmly. "You pass very lightly over the bracelets," she said, "but the affair is not such as you wish to make it seem. A sovereign lowers herself by decking herself out, and still more if she pushes it to such considerable sums, and at such times! I see but too often this spirit of dissipation; I cannot remain silent, loving you for your good, and not to flatter you."

Maria Theresa was right; her language was severe, but this severity was legitimate, and her fears were but too well founded. Behind these excessive expenditures we see appear in the future, like a threatening phantom, the law-suit of the necklace.

After the purchase of the diamonds came her play. Here also the queen suffered herself to be led on. As dauphiness she had exhibited a sufficiently strong repugnance to this kind of amusement. Even as queen, she had for a long time refused to play. Then the taste was born in the companionship of her favourites, and by the example of the Comte d'Artois, and soon grew to be very lively. "Her play has become very dear," Mercy wrote: "she no longer plays games of commerce, in which the losses are necessarily limited; lansquenet has become her ordinary play, and sometimes faro. This play is not entirely public." The king

disapproved of this high play, but they hid it from him. When he went to the house of the Princesse de Guéménée, they put away the cards a quarter of an hour before his arrival, then took them out again after his departure. They also played at the house of the Princesse de Lamballe. Louis XVI himself, with his too easy good-nature, sometimes lent himself to the vagaries of the companions of the queen; he contented himself with making fun of them rather than forbidding them. The public murmured, and the ladies of the court complained.

Once during a sojourn at Fontainebleau, the queen was desirous of playing faro; she requested permission of her husband to have some bankers come from Paris. The king made some objections, representing the danger of authorizing by court example games which were forbidden by the ordinances of the police, even at the houses of princes of the blood; then he yielded and granted the permission demanded, adding that it would be of no consequence if they only played during one evening. The bankers arrived on October 30; they cut all that night, and on the morning of the 31st, at the house of the Princesse de Lamballe, where the queen remained until five o'clock in the morning, after which her Majesty had them cut again in the evening and well on into the morning of November 1, All Saints' Day. The queen herself played until nearly three o'clock of that morning. It was unfortunate that they should have sat up so late on the eve of the solemn festival, as it occasioned public remark. The queen evaded the king's remonstrances by a jest, saying that as he had given permission for them to have a party of play, without determining the length of it, they had therefore the right to prolong it through thirty-six hours. The king laughed, and replied gayly, "Go to; you 're no good, none of you." He went further, and carried his weakness so far as to have the bankers return on November 11. Was it possible with such condescension to check a passion for play which deranged the finances of the queen and compromised her credit?

Let us hasten to say, however, that in the midst of these excesses and of that society, still infested by the corruption of Louis XV., among that youth somewhat promiscuous and at times enterprising, whom such amusements attracted to Versailles or to Fontainebleau, Marie Antoinette was able always to maintain an air which commanded respect and restrained all liberty of speech. The very ardour with which she gave herself up to frivolity did

not debase her intelligence nor the foundation of her character; and Mercy remained convinced that both the one and the other were naturally inclined to good, and would turn to it from preference in all tranquil and thoughtful moments, and that all the great qualities of the queen were only held in suspense by an inordinate dissipation, while all hope was not cut off of a more favourable return to her interests and to her honour. . "To speak the exact truth," he said, "there is less to complain of in the evil which exists than in the lack of all the good that might exist."

An extraordinary thing was that this passion for pleasure did not sensibly alter the basis of piety which the queen owed to the principles of her mother and to the instruction of her father; and despite all the errors which the ambassador did not cease to point out to the empress, often with exaggeration, Marie Antoinette continued to give to the court an example of regularity in her religious practices; and she often called a halt in the whirl of frivolity which we have just described, but of which we must not exaggerate the character.

Some historians have tried to make use of certain imprudences to asperse the young woman, and, above all, of the so-called revelations due to the fatuity of certain men admitted to her intimacy; people have talked of the *loves* of Marie Antoinette. True history has done justice to these calumnies. During this period of dissipation, from the point of view of morals she committed no error. "In all that concerns morality, there has never been in the conduct of the queen the slightest act which has not borne the imprint of a soul virtuous, upright, inflexible in all the principles which make for honesty of character. . . . No one is more entirely convinced of this fact than the king." Such is the testimony which Mercy gives in the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI., and which all his later correspondence confirmed; and such is the opinion expressed later by a brother, Joseph II., who was severe and ill-disposed toward the queen, after having observed her closely and with a rigour that was almost malevolent. And after having scrupulously studied the reports of the ambassador, of that faithful servitor and conscientious witness, who relates all, who even exaggerates the picture in order to provoke lively remonstrances on the part of the empress and serious reflections on the part of the queen, who hides none of her imprudences, and who would not have hidden her errors, if there had been any, but who did not discover one to point out to the solicitude of Maria Theresa, —

after having studied these reports, there is no impartial historian who will not agree with the words of Mercy and Joseph II., and who will not say with the eminent editor of Mercy's correspondence, that "we cannot descend in the future to repeating the evil reports, the calumnies, and the vulgar errors of Besenval, of Lauzun, and of Soulavie;" not one who will not subscribe to these lines of one of the men who knew Marie Antoinette best:

"Her so-called gallantry was never more than a sentiment of profound friendship, perhaps somewhat marked, for one or two persons, and a general coquetry natural to a woman and to a queen desirous of pleasing every one. At the very time when her youth and lack of experience might have led us to take certain liberties with her, there was never one of us who had the happiness of seeing her every day who dared to be guilty of the smallest indecorum: she acted the queen without being conscious of it; we adored her without thinking of loving her."

A man who saw Marie Antoinette as closely as the Prince de Ligne, without, however, belonging to her set, and who was with her to the end, the Baron d'Aubier, does not differ from that witty writer on this point: —

"Had she ever remained upon the throne," he says in his somewhat stilted language, "one could easily have pardoned her for surpassing every one; but having descended to the salons of friendship, the best of her friends, with all the pretensions of a French woman, only saw in her the rival who had snatched the sceptre of the salon from her. Antoinette was coquettish, without being gallant; but those who would have pardoned her being gallant to excess could not pardon her for pleasing excessively. The coxcombs, repulsed with as much dignity as indulgence at the first word they ventured to utter, became the champions of the hatred of those ladies who consoled them, only because Antoinette was not what they said she was."

The minister from Prussia himself, the Count von Goltz, so hostile to the queen and always on the watch for means to destroy her credit, and who declared that with malice the conduct of Marie Antoinette might be unfavourably interpreted, was obliged to acknowledge that no one could designate any person in particular, and that there was evident only a desire to please every one.

Recently, again, a distinguished historian, on publishing and editing the reminiscences of his father, who was still young during the reign of Louis XVI., but who was a keen and sagacious ob-

server, and even because of his youth more likely to see things as they were, as no one would mistrust him, has written the following page, which completes and confirms the judgment of the Prince de Ligne: —

"I have always heard my father say — and his memory of his youth was very exact — that the aspect of these assemblies at Trianon was most innocent; that the queen bore herself with grace and exquisite decorum; that between those women, most of whom were so young, and some most beautiful, and the small number of men admitted to their intimacy, the most perfect form always reigned. They affected to emancipate themselves from etiquette because the queen desired it. They pretended to treat her like any other woman, because this was an indirect way of paying their court; but the respect remained absolute beneath the assumed familiarity, and reserve was always evident beneath their feigned abandon. The queen was the only one who was deceived. She congratulated herself with entire good faith on having introduced into the court of France the customs of debonair Austria. According to my father, in this very exclusive circle, composed of the most privileged and devoted of her intimates, her attitude was always that of a wife careful of her duties, attached to her husband, whose very serious surroundings inconvenienced her somewhat, and who sought near at hand, and with the least risk possible, the distractions natural to her age. Some men who passed for being agreeable, and were in the fashion, were little by little introduced there. They were well received by the queen; but no one ever seemed to be particularly distinguished by her. Thus, much freedom, not a little giddiness, perhaps some coquetry, but a coquetry that was generally without aim, no appearance of deceit, no shadow of intrigue. So it seemed to my father; that is to say, he never had any faith in the serious or frivolous attachments which have been attributed to the queen, Marie Antoinette. He treated such stories as foolish or stupid; and it put him in a bad humour whenever any one appeared to believe in them."

This page from Monsieur d'Haussonville leads us very naturally to a study of the real causes of this period of dissipation which we have described in the life of the queen. If the young and lively sovereign allowed herself during some years to be carried away by a thirst of frivolity and pleasure, which her true friends sought too often in vain to moderate, it is necessary to know by whom she was thus led and why.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COMPANIONS OF THE QUEEN. — THE PRINCESSE DE LAMBALLE; HER APPOINTMENT AS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE QUEEN. — THE COMTESSE DE DILLON. — THE PRINCESSE DE GUÉMÉNÉE. — THE COMTESSE JULES DE POLIGNAC. — FAVOURS GRANTED TO THE POLIGNAC FAMILY. — THE POLIGNAC SET. — THE COMTE DE VAUDREUIL. — THE COMTE D'ADHÉMAR. — THE BARON DE BESENVAL. — THE DUC DE GUINES. — THE DUC DE LAUZUN. — FOREIGNERS. — LA MARCK — ESTERHAZY. — STEDINGK. — FERSEN. — RIVALRY OF THE FAVOURITES. — DECLINE IN FAVOUR OF THE PRINCESSE DE LAMBALLE. — INCREASING INFLUENCE OF MADAME DE POLIGNAC; DISADVANTAGES OF THIS INFLUENCE. — THE QUEEN CANNOT RESIST THE SOLICITATIONS OF HER FRIENDS. — TRUE CAUSES OF THE DISSIPATION OF MARIE ANTOINETTE.

"THIS august princess," Mercy wrote, "so interesting by reason of the exceptional qualities of her mind and character, would be irreproachable if left to herself; it is on her unworthy surroundings that we must cast the blame, and I shall struggle against them to the last moment, with the same steadfastness I have ever shown."

It is time to present to our readers these companions of the queen whom the ambassador judged so severely, and who did so much harm to the unfortunate sovereign.

While still only dauphiness, Marie Antoinette had noticed at the balls of her lady of honour, the Comtesse de Noailles, a young woman with large, tranquil eyes, long curling hair, a brilliant complexion, an undulating, supple form, a sweet face, whose charm was increased by an aureole of misfortune. A wife at eighteen, a widow at nineteen, of the unworthy son of the Duc de Penthièvre, Marie Thérèse de Savoie-Carignan, Princesse de Lamballe, had only known the disillusions and sorrows of married life. Hers was a delicate and tender heart, which knew only two attachments, — that to her father-in-law, whose old age she sustained, and whose charity she shared; that to the queen, to

whom in the days of trial she gave the most decisive proof of affection, the seal of blood. Marie Antoinette saw her, fell in love with her at first sight, charmed perhaps by the elegance of her bearing, a veritable type of grace, — for the queen was naturally attracted toward everything that was graceful, — charmed still more perhaps by her limpid gaze, the sensibility of her soul, and a certain melancholy and dreaminess that a life already so tried at so young an age had thrown round the young Italian, fair as any woman of the North. With affection confidence is born, and with confidence intimacy. The accession of the queen but strengthened these bonds; and in the winter of 1776, we find the two friends associated together in those sleigh-rides which at first amused Paris and then aroused its murmurs, — the two together mingling their freshness and their smiles, mingling in a way their curls and the sunshine of their gayety; both hiding behind their thick furs the suppleness of their figures and the roses of their faces; beautiful and radiant "as the spring, beneath marten and ermine."

The friendship with Madame de Lamballe was the only friendship of the dauphiness, the chief and longest friendship of the queen. During several years her influence was preponderant; and whatever respect a devotion whose heroism was pushed to martyrdom may inspire, this influence was not always for the queen's good. Of a somewhat narrow mind, an honest but irritable disposition, Madame de Lamballe more than once threw the court into a rage and angered the public by certain unwonted pretensions, and by her ambition either for herself or her relatives. Her brother, the Prince de Carignan, obtained, thanks to her, a pension of thirty thousand francs and a regiment of infantry, to the great displeasure of the minister, who was not consulted, and to the officers who aspired to the rank of colonel. She herself, six months later, was made superintendent of the household of the queen, the Comtesse de Noailles, whose husband had been made Maréchal de Mouchy, having resigned under pretext of accompanying her husband to his new post as governor of Guyenne, but really from jealousy of the increasing influence of the favourite. Marie Antoinette, who saw without regret her lady of honour retire, whom she had never loved, hastened to profit by her departure to obtain from the king the re-establishment of the office of superintendent, for the benefit of Madame de Lamballe. "Judge of my happiness," she wrote to the Count von Rosenberg;

"I shall make my friend happy, and I shall rejoice in it even more than she." But the re-establishment of an office which had been suppressed for more than thirty years could not but be the cause of serious inconvenience, at the very moment when reforms in the matter of economy were being undertaken. The pay of the superintendent was originally fifteen thousand livres, and thirty thousand extra for the maintenance of a table at court. The last incumbent, Madame de Bourbon, had found means, through the influence of her father, and on various pretexts, to raise this figure to fifty thousand écus, equivalent to one hundred and fifty thousand livres. The Princesse de Lamballe claimed a similar compensation; and Maurepas, who saw therein a means of making himself agreeable to the queen, urged the king to grant the request of Madame de Lamballe; the salary of the new superintendent was fixed at fifty thousand écus.

To limit the prerogatives of the office which had been re-established presented no less difficulty. Certain of the privileges were exorbitant. To cite only one, no lady of the queen could execute an order given by her without first obtaining the consent of the superintendent. They tried to reform this abuse: a new rule was made by the Abbé de Vermond; but Madame de Lamballe refused to submit to it, alleging that her father-in-law would not consent to have her accept an office stripped of its former privileges. The queen yielded to the solicitation of her friend, and all her household were incensed. The Princesse de Chimay hesitated to accept the place of lady of honour, the Comtesse de Mailly that of the lady of the bedchamber, because it seemed to them that the re-establishment of the office of superintendent would give to their positions but secondary importance. Marie Antoinette became vexed at seeing her favours thus hawked about; she commanded. Mesdames de Chimay and de Mailly submitted, but their displeasure continued.

The drawbacks soon made themselves felt. The Princesse de Lamballe, who was very fond of ceremony, and the more jealous of her prerogatives as she felt them contested, often vexed the ladies of the queen; especially were there continual disputes with the lady of honour and with the lady of the bedchamber. These incessant contentions, whose noise even reached the queen, finished by annoying her; she was provoked with Madame de Lamballe for being the occasion and cause of these quarrels, and her affection grew cooler. She sought other friends. For a while

her taste inclined to a young woman of Irish origin, the Comtesse de Dillon; large and well-made, although somewhat thin, Madame de Dillon had a charming face, and a sympathetic voice, which seemed to reflect the sweetness of her soul. Marie Antoinette was attracted by this sweetness; but soon the indiscreet demands of the new favourite, who was urged on by an intriguing mother, Madame de Roth, estranged the queen, and she treated Madame de Dillon with only the ordinary kindness she showed to all ladies of the court.

The favour of the Princesse de Guéménée was more lasting. By her birth, she was daughter of the Prince de Soubise; by her office, she was governess of the Children of France, although the queen was not yet a mother; as successor to her aunt, the Comtesse de Marsan, Madame de Guéménée held great state at the court. She gathered about her a brilliant society, and Marie Antoinette took pleasure in going to her house to pass her evenings. Mercy had in the beginning encouraged this intimacy; himself intimate with the princess, he could watch more easily all that passed at her house, and he saw therein, moreover, a counterpoise to the influence of Madame de Lamballe. The affections of his royal pupil would make him less uneasy if they were divided; they would lose in depth what they gained in extent. But the companionship of Madame de Guéménée did not offer fewer drawbacks than that of the superintendent. If what one called the Palais Royal — that is to say, the Duc de Chartres and his following — assembled at the house of Madame de Lamballe, the salon of the governess of the Children of France was the meeting-place for all the partisans of Choiseul. Her balls were noisy; her play unbridled, and what was worse, suspicious; her friends designing and indiscreet. This set was composed almost exclusively of young men, accustomed to free conversation, and given to a fault which is very dangerous in personages of high position, and to which the queen herself was somewhat inclined; namely, that of casting ridicule upon men and institutions. Although by her bearing she exacted respect from all those who surrounded her, and restrained their freedom of language, Marie Antoinette felt the danger of this intimacy, and without giving it up completely, lessened the number of her visits to the governess.

To say the truth, it was rather a thirst of pleasure than a liking for the individual that led the queen to the house of the daughter

of the Prince de Soubise; it was policy which kept her there. But her heart alone ruled in a new friendship which was more durable than that for Madame de Lamballe, since it knew no eclipse, and was as profound, since like that it was only broken by death,— her friendship for Madame de Polignac.

Married at seventeen to the Comte de Polignac, Gabrielle Yolande de Polastron had lived for a long time at Claye in a semi-retirement not altogether distasteful to her, and necessitated by the condition of her fortune. It was only at the age of twenty-five, after the death of Louis XV., that she came to Versailles, whither her sister-in-law drew her, the Comtesse Diane de Polignac, who had been made lady-in-waiting to the Comtesse d'Artois; she appeared at the court, and was immediately remarked. Her face of a perfect oval, save for the defective outline and too dark colour of the forehead, her angelic features, her large blue eyes, her long brown hair, her charming mouth, her superb teeth, her well-turned neck and shoulders, her medium figure, which, however, seemed taller than it was in reality, gave her an air of grace rather than of beauty. A nose not altogether straight, without, however, being *retroussé*, a profound gaze, wherein was reflected a naïve astonishment, an enchanting smile, a certain nonchalant languor and careless attitude which recalled the Italian Morbidezza, and a simplicity full of naturalness, in striking contrast to the noisy pretension of the other ladies of the court, added to her mien something that was both alluring and piquant. "Never did face promise more charm and sweetness than did that of Madame de Polignac," the Comte de la Marck said; "never bearing showed greater decorum, modesty, and reserve." "She had one of those heads," the Duc de Lévis said, "such as Raphael painted, wherein he combined a spiritual expression and infinite sweetness. Others might excite greater surprise and admiration, but one never tired of looking at her." She was not a witty woman, nor was she a learned woman; she was a woman of the world, who spoke little, was mistress of herself, and showed a constant loyalty to her friends, hiding perhaps beneath an apparent candour more tenacity and *finesse* than appeared.

Marie Antoinette saw the Comtesse Jules de Polignac at her balls, and then was surprised to see her no more. The countess replied that the smallness of her fortune did not allow her to live at court. This naïve and clever avowal augmented the queen's

interest: the sweet and gracious Madame de Polignac pleased her; poverty-stricken, she pleased her still more. It seemed to the queen that here was an injustice of fate to be repaired. The reserved bearing, the modest tastes, the candour of the young woman attracted her: she thought she had found what she had so long sought, — a heart that would fully sympathize with her own, hating, as she did, pomp and pretension, susceptible alone to the charms of friendship. She resolved to bind the new-comer to her by the most indissoluble of ties, that of benefits, and to enjoy with her the supreme pleasure which she had dreamed of, — the calm and simplicity of private existence in the midst of the splendours of public life. If we may believe Madame Campan, Madame de Polignac, on the advice of her friends, had recourse to an ingenious stratagem to inflame and fix the nascent affection of the young sovereign. A letter adroitly composed, a feigned departure, similar to that of the nymph of Virgil, who allowed herself to be seen only to take flight, a touching explanation throwing the whole responsibility of the departure which afflicted Marie Antoinette on the exigencies of her fortune, which did not allow her to afford the expenses of life at Versailles, were resorted to, in order to soften the heart of the queen, and by assuring the predominance of the countess, to retain the Polignacs at court. However authentic this anecdote may be, it is certain that favours of all sorts soon rained upon the new favourite. The chief reproach which history has addressed to Madame de Polignac is that she was lacking in disinterestedness, if not for herself, at least for her family and friends.

Assuredly, as the Comte de la Marck has justly said, the high position which the countess soon held at court, the entertainments which she was obliged to give, the necessity of keeping a house which became for a time that of the queen, and where even the king himself sometimes appeared, necessitated expenditures which it would have been impossible for her to afford without large pecuniary advantages. A minister, an honest man and one economical of the revenues of the State, the comptroller-general, D'Ormesson, has acknowledged that in view of the great expense to which they were forced, the demands of the Polignacs were not excessive. But when we see them receive four hundred thousand livres to pay their debts, eight hundred thousand for the dowry of their daughter, together with the post of captain of the guards for their future son-in-law, the Duc de Guiche; when we see them,

not content with such gifts, solicit the customs of the royal domain, the earldom of Bitche, which was worth one hundred thousand livres a year, and in default of the earldom of Bitche obtain, on the 2d of June, 1782, the estate of Fénestrange, which brought in sixty or seventy thousand livres, then fifteen months later a pension of eighty thousand livres from the royal treasury, and finally on Jan. 1, 1786, the general direction of posts and roads, — we begin to find these favours excessive, and their pretensions exorbitant.

Nor was this all; besides the pensions there were positions. The Vicomte de Polignac, father of Count Jules, a man of mediocre capacity, was provided with one of the most desirable offices, the mission to Switzerland, to the detriment of the brother of the minister for foreign affairs, the President de Vergennes. The count himself received the reversion of the office of first equerry to the queen, with twelve thousand livres' pension, and the use of horses and carriages. This was an increase of nearly eighty thousand livres in the expenditures, at a time when it had been decided for economical reasons to suppress the reversions. It was, besides, a deception and insult to the then titulary, the Comte de Tessy, — who, according to custom, had the right to present his own successor, — and to the powerful family of Noailles, allied to Tessy; while the promise of the office of captain of the guards to the Duc de Guiche, son-in-law of the countess, displeased the Cibracs.

Maurepas, who, as an old courtier, worshipped the rising sun, countenanced out of policy the demands of the Polignacs. The queen interested herself from affection; and though she often did not go so far as Maurepas; although on various occasions it was the minister who despite Marie Antoinette forced the king's hand for the most exorbitant of these favours, — it was not the minister whom the public held responsible, but the queen. So many benefits conferred on one family (Mercy claims that in four years the Polignacs had obtained either from large salaries or other gifts nearly five hundred thousand livres of annual revenue) displeased not only the court, but the public. "Her Majesty thinks she is sacrificing to friendship," the ambassador wrote; "and the public only sees therein a blind passion for the Comtesse de Polignac."

If Madame de Polignac had been left to herself, her influence would not have been dangerous. Being sweet and indolent, and sincerely attached to Marie Antoinette, she would have enjoyed

without ulterior motive an affection which she returned, and would not have undertaken solicitations which disturbed her tranquillity, and perhaps cost her heart a pang; but a set of young men and women grouped themselves about her, who made use of her favour and took advantage of her influence. Among these was her own sister-in-law, the Comtesse Diane de Polignac, who had been the instrument of her fortune by calling her to the court; a woman of intelligence, but designing and false, who, despite a doubtful reputation, succeeded in having herself appointed lady of honour to Madame Elisabeth.

There was the Comte de Vaudreuil, whom public malice accused of being too intimate with the favourite, and who exercised an absolute empire over her. He had a good figure, elegant manners, was a good musician, a patron of the arts, which he cultivated himself, — one of those rare men, who, according to the saying of Prince Henry, "knew how to talk to women," but he was easily carried away by anger, going so far one day as to break the queen's ivory billiard-cue in a fit of temper over a ball pocketed with too great strength. Monsieur de Vaudreuil thus spoiled genuine talents by a violent and avaricious disposition. Of an absorbing personality, and aspiring to have a hand in everything, he stopped at nothing to obtain his end, and his end was usually his own interest. Thanks to his influence over the favourite, it was he who made up at will what was called the Polignac set, and who dispensed its offices and honours.

There was the intimate friend of the Comte de Vaudreuil, the Comte d'Adhémar, who was gifted with those superficial but brilliant qualities which succeed in the world, — wit, a charming face, and agreeable social talents. He sang correctly, played comedy well, composed pretty couplets. Moreover, he possessed an ardent ambition, audacity, and a great talent for intrigue. His marriage with a widow who was already old, but madly in love with him, — the Comtesse de Valbelle, a lady of the palace, — had brought him money; the friendship of Madame de Polignac made his political fortune. Already the French minister to Brussels, he wished to be made ambassador to Constantinople, then to Vienna; but Maria Theresa opposed this last appointment, and the queen refused to urge it. Defeated in this scheme, he did not regard himself, however, as beaten; having been a subaltern during the Seven Years' War, he aspired to be minister of war. Again Marie Antoinette declared to

Madame de Polignac, who was pleading her friend's cause, that she must give up an object which for every reason was an impossibility. She did not, however, withdraw her favour from Monsieur d'Adhémar, and three years later he finally became ambassador to London.

The Baron de Besenval was not less ambitious than the Comte d'Adhémar, but his ambition was different. He did not aspire to be minister; he wished to make ministers. Thus he appears in his memoirs, and such was his real character, — a fool, vain, designing, caring much to possess favour, and still more to seem to possess it, indiscreet, a sceptic with regard to the disinterestedness of men and the virtue of women, witty moreover, and to a certain degree attractive. Holding the rank of lieutenant-colonel of the Swiss Guards, the Baron de Besenval was more than fifty-five when he was admitted to Marie Antoinette's set. His air of good-nature, his affectation of simplicity, his amiable and often amusing conversation, his knowledge of the court, even his political aspirations, his fidelity to Choiseul, whom he did not cease to exalt, his adroit flatteries, disguised under an appearance of straightforwardness and independence, the cleverness and eagerness with which he encouraged the secret inclinations of Marie Antoinette and preached a contempt of etiquette and the sweetness of private life, promptly won him the sympathies of the young sovereign, whom, moreover, his white hairs reassured. She believed in his merit and in his devotion, and for a time Besenval was the man in fashion, the ruler of the Polignac set; he was the originator of all their plans, the leader of all their parties. It needed but little for the queen to look upon him as a guide for her youth; she even allowed herself one day to show a confidence in him which with his habitual presumption Besenval hastened to abuse. But how could the queen mistrust an old man of fifty-five, who might have been her father, and whom she treated, as Madame Campan has said, "like a brave, polite Swiss, of no great consequence"? But a day came when the old man, believing everything permitted to him, wished to make use of the confidence which the queen showed him to wring from her a State secret. The queen, justly indignant at an insistence which became, to use Mercy's expression, "an indecent persecution," could not help showing him a marked coldness; without banishing him completely from her presence, she exiled him for a time from her intimacy. Thus disappointed, he avenged him-

self for his deserved disgrace by inserting in his posthumous memoirs libellous insinuations which happily the reputation alone of their author is sufficient to discredit.

Messieurs de Vaudreuil, d'Adhémar, and de Besenval were the three principal leaders of the Polignac set; they were not, however, alone. Around these ruling stars were grouped numerous satellites, some of whom hoped to rule in their turn. Among these was the Duc de Guines, whose trial we have previously described. Ambitious, designing, avaricious, in the midst of the American war, and despite the opposition of the minister of finance, he had found means to obtain one hundred thousand écus as a dowry for his daughter, and the title of hereditary duke for his son-in-law, the Marquis de Castries; though a personage of mediocre talent, he was able at that epoch, when genius was rare, and thanks to the support of a restless and clamorous faction, to pass for a while for a statesman, and even aspired to the office of prime minister. His schemes were vast, his self-possession imperturbable, his warmth in defending his ideas catching. For a time the queen was taken by it. A letter from Maria Theresa, in confirmation of repeated observations from Mercy, opened her eyes. She saw the worth of her protégé; and without advertising a disgrace which would have seemed a disavowal, she treated him for the future with more coldness. The duke perceived it, and withdrew from the court.

Besides these, there were the Duc de Polignac, "the husband of his wife," who, indeed, did not aspire to rule; and the Duc de Coigny, appointed at the end of 1774 first equerry to the king, and, like the Duc de Guines, a great partisan of Choiseul, — a proud and loyal character, to whom the queen was grateful for having refused to bend the knee before Madame du Barry; a man of perfect good-breeding, and of discretion beyond proof, but who was avaricious of favour to the point of taking umbrage at that of Madame de Polignac, and of putting himself for a moment in opposition to her. There were also: the Marquis de Coigny, son of the duke; the Marquis de Conflans, son of the Maréchal d'Armentières, and brother-in-law to the Marquis de Coigny, a determined Anglomaniac, one of the most singular characters of the time, and one of those rare courtiers whom the king liked, because he was a good rider and bold hunter; the Comte and the Chevalier de Coigny, brothers of the duke, — the first a big, good-natured boy, the second a pretty man much

admired by the women, who called him "Mimi;" the Bailiff of Crussol, serious even in his jesting; the Chevalier de Lille, a friend of the Coignys, and famed for his amiability, his wit, and his facility in turning agreeable couplets and satirical ballads; the Chevalier de Luxembourg, ambitious and wicked, according to Mercy, but whose favour was but fleeting; the Comte de Polastron, brother of Madame de Polignac, an excellent violinist; his wife, an accomplished beauty, whose somewhat careless grace, and languishing head carried on one side, seemed made to inspire passion, and who did in fact inspire it; the Comtesse de Chalons, *née* D'Andlau, a cousin of the favourite, and a friend of the Duc de Coigny; the daughter of Madame de Polignac, the Duchesse de Guiche, to whom Grimm gallantly applied this line of Horace, —

"Mater pulchra filia pulchrior;"

and the beautiful and *spirituelle* Marquise de Coigny, who did not long remain loyal. Finally, the most brilliant and the most dangerous of all was the impetuous Duc de Lauzun, a nephew and disciple of the Maréchal de Richelieu, — brave as his sword, chivalrous as his race; more proud of his exploits in gallantry than of his military feats; intelligent but lacking in judgment; a libertine and crippled with debts, whose greatest virtue in the eyes of posterity is in having been the husband of that sweet and charming Amélie de Boufflers, who, in that corrupt society and with a husband so little married, as he himself said, that it was not worth speaking of, preserved an irreproachable and dignified attitude, and left an untarnished reputation for faithfulness and virtue. This Duc de Lauzun is the same who enjoyed during a time Marie Antoinette's favour, who aspired to direct her and to give her advice, who, after having dared in his incredible vanity to pose as the queen's lover and offer her a heron's feather which he had worn, pushed his fatuity so far as to make her a declaration, and who, thunder-struck by her energetic "Go, Monsieur!" spoken in an indignant tone, left the palace with lowered head and rage in his heart. When, later, Lauzun became the Duc de Brion, furious at this discomfiture and hurt at the constant coldness of the queen, who had been justly offended, and attributing to this legitimate anger the failure of his aspirations to succeed his uncle as colonel of the French Guards, he threw himself, out of vengeance, into the Revolution, and after having been one of the

most implacable enemies of Marie Antoinette during her lifetime, became after her death the most odious and untruthful of her defamers.

Then, again, among these great French nobles, but grouping themselves about Marie Antoinette rather than about Madame de Polignac, were the foreign gentlemen, — valiant young men who, fascinated by the irresistible attraction which France in the eighteenth century exercised over all polite societies, thronged from all parts of Europe, to seek amusement, and many of them a career, in the armies of the king and at the court of the queen. Among them was the Prince de Ligne, one of the most amiable and witty men of that time when there were so many amiable and witty men, — one of those who best appreciated Marie Antoinette, and who, according to his own expression, " adored her without thinking of loving her."

Another of these foreigners at the French court was the Comte de la Marck, Auguste d'Aremberg, a Belgian, like the Prince de Ligne, belonging, like him, to one of those princely families who served indifferently France, the Empire, and Spain; French at heart, if not by birth, he was one of the most respectfully devoted in the days of good fortune, and one of the most faithful in misfortune. There too was the Comte de Valentin Esterhazy, whose favour alarmed Mercy and displeased Maria Theresa, — an honest character, who did not please by his looks, for he was very ugly, but by his good qualities, his frankness, his zeal, and his disinterestedness; who had the honour of being one of Marie Antoinette's correspondents, and the still greater honour of being one of her most active defenders in the hour of danger. In the same group was the Count of Stedingk, who owed to the personal recommendation of the king of Sweden, Gustavus III., his introduction to the court of France, and to his brilliant career in America his admission to the suppers of the queen; overwhelmed by the bounties of that princess, he was not, however, ungrateful. Recalled in 1781 by the king of Sweden, who had just declared war against Russia, Stedingk left Versailles with keen regret, which became even keener when he was retained in the service of his master on the confines of Europe at the beginning of the Revolution, and could not therefore fly to the succour of that queen whom he felt to be menaced more than any other, and of that France which he loved, as he said, " enough to drown himself for her."

Finally, the most attractive of all these figures was Fersen, who seldom frequented the salon of the Polignacs, for the reason, perhaps, that his chivalrous nature revolted against the petty intrigues which Messieurs de Besenval and de Vaudreuil were continually weaving. The Count Axel von Fersen, of a noble Swedish family, whose father was the chief of the party of the *Chapeaux*, or the French faction in Stockholm, had appeared at Versailles in the spring of 1774. Tall, with a distinguished bearing, a handsome face, which was regular without being expressive, with deep and somewhat melancholy eyes, of a serious character, having, as Monsieur de Lévis said, "more judgment than wit," hiding a passionate soul under an armour of ice, and possessing to a supreme degree those qualities so rare at court, — namely, an extreme circumspection toward men and a rare reserve with women, — Fersen had attracted attention on his first appearance. "It is not possible," the ambassador from Sweden, the Count of Creutz, wrote, "to bear one's self more wisely or decorously than he has done." The dauphiness had admitted him to her receptions, and had conversed with him at a ball at the opera. The friends of Gustavus III., Mesdames de Brionne, de la Marck, and d'Anville, had received him with open arms.

A second voyage in 1778 and 1779 established his reputation. Received with distinction in the principal salons, well treated by the royal family, Fersen saw his favour increase to such an extent that the courtiers took umbrage at it, and calumny fell upon it. They said that the queen had an especial liking for the young Swede; that she sought him out at the balls at the opera, and in her more intimate assemblies, and exchanged tender looks with him; that she always addressed a gracious word to him; that she had expressed a desire to see him in his national uniform, and that on learning of his departure for the war in America, she had not been able to restrain her tears. The truth is that Fersen — grateful for the kindly reception of the queen, for her charming attentions, and for her obliging remembrance of him, so commented upon by her contemporaries, which had made her cry on seeing him again in 1778, "Ah, here is an old acquaintance!" — wrote to his father, "She is the most amiable princess I have ever known," and as a result had conceived a respectful devotion to the sovereign, heightened perhaps by a discreet sentiment for the woman; that on her side Marie Antoinette, having found

in this young man a solid character, a delicate reserve, and a disinterested zeal, which she had found but too seldom among those about her, had been touched by it. To what degree? Fersen has taken care to determine it in the reply which he made to the Duchesse de Fitz-James on his departure. "What, Monsieur, you are abandoning your conquest?" "If I had made one, I should not abandon it; I depart free, and unfortunately leave no one to regret me." The queen herself unconsciously gave the lie to these injurious reports, when four years later she warmly but simply recommended Fersen to the king of Sweden, publicly speaking his praise, instead of maintaining with regard to him, as an historian has said, a reserve which would have been held to be significant.

Some persons murmured at the preference which Marie Antoinette accorded to foreigners, and the Comte de la Marck permitted himself one day to say to her that it would do him harm in the eyes of Frenchmen. "What can I do?" she replied sadly; "they ask nothing of me."

Such were the principal members of what was called at first the Polignac set, and later the queen's set, when the salon of the favourite had become the salon of the sovereign. They composed an exclusive circle which permitted no division of favour, and which, to prevent all dangerous intrusion, tore to shreds all those who might aspire to rival them. "Altogether," wrote one of the ladies of the court, who did not pass, however, for having an evil tongue, but who had had occasion to complain of their attacks, "this famous set is made up of persons who are very wicked, and who display an incredible amount of arrogance and spite. They believe themselves made to judge all the rest of the world. . . . They are so afraid lest some one should insinuate himself into favour that they rarely praise any one, but tear all to pieces at their ease. Yet we must bear this and say nothing."

Madame de Lamballe also had her set. It was composed, Mercy said, of somewhat less illustrious conspirators; otherwise there was no difference. There were to be found there, in company with the Comte d'Artois and the Duc de Chartres, the followers of the Palais Royal and the House of Orléans. Besides these, the *habitués* of the salon of Madame de Lamballe were not numerous; the courtiers had promptly perceived that the wind did not blow from that quarter.

A rivalry was soon established between the two favourites, and

the queen found herself beset with insinuations of all kinds; but the issue of the struggle could not be doubtful. Naïve and timid, with no resources of intellect to support the graces of her person and the tenderness of her heart, and a susceptibility which was easily wounded, what could Madame de Lamballe do against Madame de Polignac, who enjoyed the advantage of being a novelty, and who, besides her natural attractions, had the benefit of the experience of friends who had grown old in their profession? The countess complained gently, respectfully, and tenderly, gave signs of uneasiness and chagrin, and adroitly cast ridicule upon her rival, which, falling upon a mind naturally inclined to mockery, almost always produced its effect. Little by little Marie Antoinette came to laugh at her first friend. More open and less clever, Madame de Lamballe complained aloud, and sometimes with bitterness, and her complaints annoyed the queen. Too great frankness and openness rarely please at court; hints and half-lights are more successful. The partisans of Madame de Polignac knew this well. They rarely attacked the queen openly; they surrounded her with an almost imperceptible network, in which in the end she found herself captive. They profited by all the mistakes of the superintendent, exaggerated her faults, cried out against her pretensions, which incensed the court, against her jealousy, which admitted of no rivalry, and emphasized her timidity, which they called her stupidity. Little by little the queen grew to dislike Madame de Lamballe, and without perceiving it herself, accustomed herself to do without her.

The relation became strained between the two friends. Madame de Lamballe, displeased, made an excuse to dispense with keeping open house; it was pointed out to her that she should give suppers at least on the days when there was a ball. She yielded, but with repressed irritation, and as soon as occasion again offered, sought another excuse for remaining aloof. The coldness of the queen increased with what seemed to her the ingratitude of her friend; and a day came when Madame de Lamballe, feeling that she was only tolerated and that she was becoming an object of embarrassment and weariness, decided to leave the court, and no one sought to detain her. She retired to the neighbourhood of her father-in-law, the Duc de Penthièvre, whose solitary life and good deeds she shared, and but rarely appeared at Versailles. But if she were lacking in intelligence, her heart

remained ever the same. Misfortune freed her affection of all that had seemed to be exacting and selfish in it during the time of prosperity. In the hour of danger she was not found wanting.

The favour of Madame de Polignac increased with the decline of her rival. Her star rose alone and undimmed on the horizon of Versailles. The court flocked to her house; and the Comte d'Artois himself, who had been for some time loyal to the superintendent, joined the victorious party. To say the truth, the Comte d'Artois went wherever he could amuse himself; and the assemblies which Madame de Lamballe had refused to hold, and which had therefore been held at the house of the Princesse de Guéménée, began to take place in the salon of Madame de Polignac. The queen fell into the habit of going in the evening to her friend, and she even succeeded in leading the king thither. The court hastened to follow them there. They assembled in a large wooden hall, built at the extremity of a wing of the palace, which overlooked the orangery. At the end there was a billiard-table; on the right a piano; on the left a table of quinze. On Sunday there was a mob. "Does Madame de Polignac receive all France?" the Prince de Ligne asked the Chevalier de Lille. "Yes," the chevalier wrote in reply; "three days a week, — Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, from morning to evening. During these seventy hours there is a general ballet: who will, enters; who will, sups. You should see how the rabble of courtiers flock there. They occupy during these three days, besides the salon, always full, the greenhouse, which has been made into a gallery, at the end of which is a billiard-table. During the four days that are not named above, the door is only open to us privileged ones."

The prestige of Madame de Polignac did not decrease; the queen could not do without her friend. She was the only person of those about her, Mercy has said, concerning whom it was impossible for him to open the queen's eyes. She showed her in all places and at all times marked favour. In the evening she took her arm, traversed with her the antechamber, filled with people, without other following than a page and two footmen; and this unwonted familiarity, the sign of an affection without precedent, caused those present to murmur. Did Madame de Polignac go to pass some time in the country, the queen wrote to give her news of Versailles. Was she ill, the queen went each week to see her. It happened that her illness was but the begin-

ning of her pregnancy. It was decided that at the time of the confinement of the favourite, the court should be established during nine days at La Muette. This time it was not only the court, but Paris that thought such demonstrations exorbitant. Rumour spread that Madame de Polignac made an immoderate use of her influence to enrich herself, as well as all her family; and although a great deal of envy and a certain amount of exaggeration entered into these complaints, the details which we have given above prove that they were not without foundation. To crown all these favours, six months after her confinement Madame de Polignac received the honour of being allowed to sit in the presence of the king and queen, and her husband the title of hereditary duke. "There are few instances," Mercy wrote concerning this last event, "of a favour which has been so useful to a family in so short a time."

The court murmured; the public was displeased. The queen, wholly given up to her affection, saw neither the displeasure of the court nor of the public. The kindness of her heart, the desire to please those whom she loved, and a strange timidity in so great a princess, an invincible repugnance to say no, an infinite weakness in yielding to the counsels of those whom she believed to be attached to her, left her without defence against the importunities of her friends. It was only necessary to insist with some obstinacy for her to yield. Mercy complained as early as 1772 of this regrettable weakness. "Those who have sufficient boldness to dare to weary her with their importunity," he wrote, "are almost sure of gaining an ascendancy over her; and even when she has no affection for them, and recognizes the injustice of their demands, she often yields to them solely out of fear." Age had not corrected this unfortunate disposition; and what was still more vexatious was that in proportion as the queen was timid in the face of solicitations, to the same degree was she importunate in her demands for her friends. Lively and ardent, she caught fire immediately on the presentation of a request, without concerning herself sufficiently to consider its extent, and the rights of the person who made it; and when she had once taken a thing to heart, her instances were so pressing, the idea of her power so great, that not only did ministers not dare to refuse, but it chanced that they sometimes even exceeded her intentions.

Madame de Polignac, and especially her friends, soon discovered this weakness, and made use of it to their profit. If the

queen knew not how to resist their appeals, she could still less resist their tears; and it was this last means to which the favourite resorted when she encountered in her royal friend a firmness upon which she had not counted. Before this supreme assault the queen always capitulated. It happened sometimes that she grew impatient; nor did she deny the drawbacks of her surroundings in her conversation with the faithful counsellors whom her mother had placed near her. Her affection for her friends did not lessen her perspicacity; with her keen intelligence and clear judgment she saw their faults as quickly as she was seduced by their virtues; but their virtues made her too easily ignore their faults, whose consequences she did not sufficiently calculate. "She overlooks everything," Mercy wrote in 1776, at the time of her greatest frivolity,—"she overlooks everything in those who can make themselves useful to her in her amusements." She was happy only in those salons where the subject of the conversation was within her comprehension; where all concerned themselves to amuse and divert her; where they flattered her tastes, and, above all, her weaknesses; where she was indemnified, as she thought, for the weariness which she endured during the rest of the day. If she sometimes withdrew from these companions, she always returned. And thus the time passed in vain if not in dangerous conversations, in games of cards, in races, in piquant and often cutting pleasantries; and there was none left for serious occupations, for reading, for reflection, for that travail of the soul which gives birth to great thoughts, and prepares one for great deeds.

Was it, then, only a thirst of pleasure which attracted Marie Antoinette to the society of her favourites, and urged her to form and constantly strengthen these ties? Assuredly this motive was present; there was also that desire for activity so natural in a princess of nineteen; the sap of her youth, which had been held in check during the last years of the reign of Louis XV., when it was once free spread in all its luxuriance. But she was also urged by a nobler sentiment,—the need of loving and being loved for herself, a thirst of affection which was not satisfied in her home-life. The king was kind, often thoughtful toward his wife; Mercy declared one day that he was in love with her. But it was with a cold, timid, and embarrassed love, which ill responded to her heart of twenty, full of fire and tenderness. This warmth of sentiment, this expansiveness, which she did not find in her husband, Marie

Antoinette sought in her friends; and lacking love as she understood it, she wished at least for friendship in its fullest extent.

To this reason, besides, there was joined another of a more private nature. There was in the life of the queen a sad void, which filled her with unspeakable grief. The passion for amusement which consumed her was often but an extreme need of distraction, an irresistible desire to escape the weariness which devoured her. Her amusements were but a veil thrown over a grief which she would not avow, and her smiles often hid bitter tears. We know to-day — the reports of Mercy establish it on each page — the delicate situation in which Marie Antoinette was placed during seven years by the strange coldness of her husband. She wore the crown of France, but she sighed in vain for that crown of maternity which adds so pure a radiance and so noble a dignity to the forehead of twenty. This was the most subtle of dangers for a young wife, as well as the most poignant grief. The vigilant solicitude of Maria Theresa became alarmed. The public blamed the queen for the situation which was so painful to her, and for which she was not responsible; it could not pardon her for allowing the Comtesse d'Artois to outstrip her in that mission, altogether royal, of giving heirs to the throne.

"The almost certain pregnancy of the Comtesse d'Artois," Mercy wrote, "gives but too many subjects for disagreeable reflections, and I am really disturbed for the effect which it may in the end produce in the heart of the queen. However brilliant her position may be at this moment, it will never be solid until this august princess has given an heir to the State. Until that time, so much to be desired, the very advantages which the queen enjoys entail certain drawbacks; her influence, her power, disturb a nation which is petulant and light, and which fears to be governed by a princess who lacks the virtue of being a mother in order to be regarded as a Frenchwoman."

This situation, which was so perilous and so false, was bitterly resented by Marie Antoinette; and it was to distract herself — she even owned it one day to Mercy — that she threw herself into this vortex of amusement. Finding neither in the life at court, nor, above all, in her private life, the satisfaction which she had dreamed of, she expended upon the friends of her choice the ardent and expansive affection which she missed in her husband, and which she could not spend on the fair heads of children, whom she so dearly loved. Such is the true explanation of the dissipation, apparently inexplicable, of Marie Antoinette during the first

years of her reign, and her enthusiasm for her favourites. If some of this still remained after the birth of her first child, it was because one cannot break in a day the habits and friendships of many years; but in proportion as the wave of maternal love rose in her heart, her wasted hours gave place to serious ones, the preoccupation of the education of her children succeeded to her desire for amusement; and the queen little by little withdrew from the salons of her friends, to remain by the cradle of her children, and prepared herself by the joys of maternity for the struggle and the bitterness of her later ordeal.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRIANON. — THE KING GIVES THE QUEEN LITTLE TRIANON. — THE CHÂTEAU. — THE GARDENS. — THE EXOTIC TREES. — THE RIVER. — THE THEATRE. — THE TEMPLE OF LOVE. — THE BELVEDERE. — THE GROTTO. — THE HAMLET. — THE DAIRY. — TRAVELLERS' OPINIONS OF TRIANON. — ARTHUR YOUNG. — THE RUSSIAN KARAMSINE. — THE BARONESS VON OBERKIRCHE. — THE PRINCE DE LIGNE. — THE APARTMENTS: THE DINING-ROOM; THE LITTLE SALON; THE BATH-ROOM; THE BOUDOIR; THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER. — MARIE ANTOINETTE AND THE ARTS. — THE MARIE ANTOINETTE STYLE. — THE QUEEN'S APARTMENTS AT FONTAINEBLEAU. — LIFE OF THE QUEEN AT TRIANON. — ENTERTAINMENTS IN HONOUR OF ILLUSTRIOUS VISITORS. — MARIE ANTOINETTE AND LITERATURE. — MUSIC. — GLUCK AND PICCINI. — GRÉTRY. — SALIÉRI. — THE THEATRE. — THE QUEEN'S COMPANY. — COMEDY AT TRIANON. — THE EXPENSES OF TRIANON. — THE DISADVANTAGES OF TRIANON.

TO this select and exclusive set which we have just described, a private stage was necessary. For this young sovereign, inimical to pomp and etiquette, athirst for simplicity and solitude, a palace in harmony with her tastes was needed.

Versailles was large; Marly too cold; Fontainebleau and Compiègne too far. This new abode, where the queen was to be at home and herself, was to be Trianon.

"His Majesty grows gallant," the Abbé Baudeau wrote, on May 31, 1774: "he said to the queen, 'You love flowers. Very well, I have a bouquet to present to you; it is Little Trianon.'" It is in these words that a chronicler of the time announces the gift of Louis XVI. to Marie Antoinette. But we know to-day that the thing did not happen thus, and that it was the queen, who, desirous since a long while of having a country house for herself, asked her husband for Little Trianon. But the king yielded with the best grace in the world to his wife's request. At her first word, he replied with true civility that this country house belonged to the queen, and that he was charmed to make her a present of it.

Little Trianon, begun in 1753, and finished in 1766 by the architect Gabriel, had been for Louis XV. what it was to be for Marie Antoinette, — a retreat where the sovereign went to forget the pomp of Versailles and the intrigues of the court. It was a little square pavilion of the Corinthian order, built in the Italian style, with a single principal story, a basement, and a very low second story, five windows on each side, which were separated on the front by beautiful columns with acanthus capitals, and by four pilasters of the same order on the other façades. A simple but elegant edifice, situated in the midst of a park, which was to serve both as a school of gardening and as a botanical garden, and united as in an open-air museum the various kinds of gardens then known, — French, Italian, and English. An emeritus horticulturist, Claude Richard, had gathered there, on the order of the king, the most beautiful species of exotic trees, constructed greenhouses, and laid out parterres; and the old monarch, who loved the physical sciences, had often gone there to botanize with his captain of the guards, the Duc d'Ayen, or to talk plants with him whom Linnæus called the cleverest gardener of Europe. From 1771 to 1774 his journeys to Trianon had been frequent; and it was there, on April 26, 1774, that the king had experienced the first symptoms of the disease which was to carry him off.

Marie Antoinette had not, like her grandfather, a taste for natural history; but she had, like him, and even to a greater degree, a taste for retirement and a passion for the beautiful. Hardly had she taken possession of her new domain, by a dinner given to her husband on June 6, before she began to think of transforming it and fashioning it to her taste. The botanical garden interested her but little. The French garden did not please her: its long straight vistas, its avenues laid out by line, its trimmed trees, reminded her always of Versailles and of etiquette. The English garden, with its imitation of nature, its trees growing without constraint, its harmonious curves, its meadows, its charm of the unexpected, pleased her better; it seemed to her the symbol of liberty, which she had come to Trianon in search of. It was, moreover, the fashion of the moment: Horace Walpole in England, the Prince de Ligne in Belgium, in France certain rich financiers, or great personages, — Boutin at Tivoli, Laborde at Méréville, the Duc d'Orléans at Monceau, Monsieur de Girardin at Ermenonville, — had made English parks of universal reputation; the queen wished to have hers

at Trianon. The botanical garden was sacrificed; the plants and herbs were transported to the Jardin du Roi; and the space remained free for the new creation of the young sovereign. Her Lenôtre was a noble, a distinguished amateur and clever designer, the Marquis de Caraman. The queen went on July 23, 1774, to visit the garden of the Hôtel Caraman in the Rue St. Dominique; she remained there an hour and a half, found it charming, herself charmed every one, and begged the happy proprietor for his counsel for Trianon. Under his direction the architect Mique made the plan; Antoine Richard, son and successor of Claude, carried it out. With rare talent he made use of the riches already there, and while forming new groupings, succeeded in preserving the most beautiful specimens of the foreign trees.

But the queen was not content with the plantations of Louis XV.; each day she had new ones made. She increased her collections; she made requisitions from all known countries; explorers from over the sea were commissioned to bring her plants; eight hundred species were gathered together in the park. "The glory of Little Trianon," Arthur Young wrote, "are the exotic shrubs and trees. The whole world has been put under contribution to ornament it." Italy sent its evergreens; Louisiana its taxodiums; Arabia its aromatic firs; Virginia its robinias; China its rose acacias; the New World innumerable varieties of oak and nut trees. The Abbés Nolet, Williams, and Moreau de la Rochette describe two hundred and thirty-nine kinds of trees and shrubs which North America alone furnished to Little Trianon. Evergreens abounded; the queen desired verdure even in winter. Pines from Corsica, green oaks from Provence, cypresses from Crete, arbutus from the Pyrenees, mingled their sombre foliage with the warmer tones of the red beeches and the lighter masses of the sophoras and tulips. Jussieu made out the list; Bonnefoy du Plan supervised the plantation. The queen watched them grow and blossom; she had the cedar of Lebanon, which Jussieu had planted, watered before her eyes; and at Trianon the robinia opened its perfumed clusters for the first time in France before her. Everywhere and always there were flowers; in the spring the lilacs, the favourites of the Comte d'Artois, who cultivated them at Bagatelle, syringas, snowballs, tuberoses. The parterres were filled with the most marvellous varieties of the iris, with tulips and hyacinths from Holland. Then there were the orange-

trees, which perfumed the air with their penetrating odour, and of which the gardeners watched the blossoms during the night with jealous care; the queen sold the harvest of them, — thirty pounds in bad years, sixty in good ones, and seventy-eight in 1780. From the first the park had been enlarged; the meadow in which Louis XV. had amused himself by making experiments in cultivating the land with a plough — which was for a long time preserved — had been added to it. There the inequalities of ground were imitated: ravines were dug, hills were raised, great masses of rock were deposited; a river was planned, whose waters, springing from a perpendicular rock surmounted by a ruin, traversed the lawn in front of the château, sometimes visible, and sometimes hidden behind clumps of foliage, only to reappear a little farther on. It was a real river, this, although two thousand fathoms of pipe brought it from Marly, — not a solemn and regular sheet of water, as at Versailles, but a river with its natural course, its graceful meanderings, its bed of pebbles, its harmonious cascades, its murmuring flow, crossed by real bridges of stone from Vergelay, or of rustic wood, like those in Switzerland, flowing between two banks of turf, whose flowered stretches, a traveller has said, "seemed only to await the apparition of a shepherd."

In the midst of these gardens rose charming edifices, springing from the ground as if under the wand of a fairy, — imitations of ruins, rustic houses, Chinese pavilions, a collection in that little corner of the world of the specimens of art and architecture of all times and countries.

From whatever side of the château one looked, the aspect was different. To the right of the façade was the English park, with its clumps of trees, its sheets of water, its lawns, reaching to a rocky and wild cliff, planted with yews, with thuyas, and with firs. Before the façade itself, toward the west, spreading out beneath the *perron*, and separated from Great Trianon by a double grille, was the French garden in the style of Lenôtre, with its parterres laid out at right angles, its avenues of orange-trees, its bowers, its statues placed in niches of foliage, its vases filled with rare flowers, and at the end the pavilion which served as a dining-room for Louis XV. And then on the other side, the theatre, built in 1778, with its portico formed of two Ionic columns; its pediment strewn with instruments of music, in the midst of which reclined an infant Apollo, holding a lyre in his left hand, a crown in his right; its decorations in white and gold; its chairs in blue

velvet; its three tiers of galleries resting upon consoles representing the head and skin of a lion, a device of Louis XVI.; its branches of oak and garlands of flowers held by Cupids; its ceiling, whereon Lagrenée had painted Apollo, the Graces, and Thalia and Melpomene; its nymphs, with cornucopias, on either side of the stage where the curtain was raised; its groups of women bearing torches; its Muses, who with their softly rounded arms framed the monogram of the queen.

On the third side of the château, behind, there was still the English garden, where the river wound in a thousand turns among the poplars and maples. From the bosom of the water rose, light and graceful as a naiad, an island of elegant outline, and upon the island the most enchanting marvel perhaps of that enchanting Eden, a round temple of perfect proportion, whose Corinthian colonnade, delicately carved, sheltered beneath a rosette of acanthus leaves a statue of love by Bouchardon; the god, in all the beauty and force of youth, was carving a bow from the club of Hercules. And farther on, the lake with its gently graded shores, its tranquil ripples, on which glided the gilt gondolas, with their *fleur de lis*, and their pavilion in the colours of the queen, blue and white striped, that came from the Port of Departure bound for the Port of Return.

Each year brought an addition to this fairy creation. In 1776, at a short distance from the palace, the Chinese pavilion was built, and beneath the pavilion a roundabout, which was moved by invisible mechanism hidden beneath the ground, and whose riders sat astride of dragons and peacocks, carved by Bocciardi. In 1778 the Belvedere rose on the hill, among thickets of roses, myrtle, and jasmine. Mique had made the plan for it; the queen went there every morning to take her breakfast, served on a table of gray marble, that rested on three feet of gilt bronze. From thence, through four openings turned toward the four cardinal points, she could view her whole domain and the river, which, springing from a mass of wild rock near by, flowed lazily about the base of the pavilion, as if leaving with regret so enchanting a site. Eight sphinxes with female heads guarded the entrance; above the windows four groups, from the chisel of Deschamps, symbolized the four seasons; above the doors the attributes of the hunt and of gardening, carved by the same hand. In the interior, the floor was in white, blue, and rose marble; and upon the stucco walls ran light arabesques, a graceful mixture of

smoking tripods, quivers, vases, and bouquets of flowers. Here a goldfinch drank from an onyx goblet; there two doves chased each other; beyond, a squirrel was eating a nut, or a canary was escaping from a golden cage.

Not far from the Belvedere, and half hidden in a narrow ravine shaded by thick masses of trees, was a grotto which was only reached after a thousand turnings by a sombre stair cut in the rock. The rivulet which traversed it exhaled a delicious freshness; the light penetrated but dimly through a crack in the roof; a bushy growth concealed it from indiscreet eyes; the moss which carpeted the walls and ceiling prevented the noises of the outer world from entering. It was a place for retirement and rest until the day when the queen was to hear the first murmurs of October 5.

And now follow the river, pass the Temple of Love, push on to the lake. You will soon see the favourite creation of the queen, that which best represents her individuality, that which sprang altogether from her imagination and from her heart, — a work in the execution of which she had two allies, her architect, Mique, and her painter, Hubert Robert. There is no longer solitude as in the grotto: here is life, or at least the appearance of life, and of practical and laborious life. Here is a hamlet, with eight cottages, each one of which arranged as if to house a family of peasants, surrounded by a little garden planted with vegetables and fruit-trees. The roofs are thatched, the windows furnished with little leaded panes of glass; the galleries are of carved wood, over which honeysuckle and five-leaved ivy climb. There are barns to hold the harvest, wooden staircases to ascend to the granaries, wooden benches to sit upon. The queen's house, which communicates by a gallery with the billiard-house, is naturally the most beautiful of them all. She had vases of faience from St. Clement, filled with flowers, and grape arbours. Not far off rose the tower of Marlborough, which received its name from an old song hummed by Madame Poitrine, the dauphin's nurse, whose spiral staircase, decorated with geraniums and gilliflowers, was reflected in the lake.

The hamlet was complete; nothing was lacking that constitutes a real hamlet, — neither the farm, nor the grange, nor the poultry-yard, nor the gardener's house, nor that of the guard, nor the mill with its turning wheel. The queen and Hubert Robert thought of everything. Those historians of Marie Antoinette who have the best described in their playful style this charming

creation, wrote: "The queen and Hubert Robert have thought of everything, even to painting the fissures in the rocks, the cracks in the plaster, the bulging of the beams and bricks in the walls, as though time would not ruin rapidly enough the play-things of a queen."

There was a veritable farmhouse thatched with straw, and living animals, beautiful Swiss cows, lambs, sheep that baaed, pigeons that cooed, and hens that cackled. There was a farmer named Valy, a guard named Vercy, a little boy who drove the cows, a maid-servant who carried the milk. The dairy was built on the edge of the lake, which served as refrigerator; and if the water from the lake was not suitable, they drew other water from seven fountains, surmounted by figures of children holding swans with outspread wings. The slabs were of white marble; the milk was set on them in vessels of porcelain made at the queen's factory in moulds afterwards broken. In the hamlet, if we may believe a traveller, though his testimony seems untrustworthy, "the king was miller, the queen was farmer, and Monsieur was school-master." It was village life, as one understood it in the eighteenth century, such as Florian had made fashionable; a poem of Homer, an eclogue of Virgil, annotated by a story of Berquin, wherein Nausicas, perfumed and powdered, washed linen bordered with lace, with ebony beetles; where Tietryes with red heels, crowned with garlands of roses, tended the sheep with crooks of gold. "It is a sheep-fold," the Chevalier de Boufflers said, "where nothing is lacking but the wolf."

The hamlet was begun in 1782, and finished in 1788. Despite changes of plans and obstacles, it was built quickly; for the queen was eager in her desires. "You know your mistress," Fontainieu, the guardian of the stock, wrote to the architect Mique; "she loves to enjoy things immediately." Then after its completion came a new transformation, for, to use Boufflers's expression, "the wolf entered the sheep-fold," and Marie Antoinette replied to the calumny which had already begun to assail her, with charity: "In this opera-bouffe village she installed twelve poor families, whom she supported out of her savings."

All these creations of Trianon are delicious. Nothing can give any idea of their charm, which has survived after a hundred years, and gained a shade of melancholy which is but an attraction the more. The reputation of these gardens became at once universal; poets sang of them; lovers of the beautiful admired them. But

from the first the malice of the chroniclers attacked the graceful fancy of the sovereign, and accused her of having changed the name of her domain to a German name. The queen was indignant; and to those who had the simplicity or impudence to ask permission to visit Little Vienna, she replied by a refusal that was a lesson. To all others Trianon was open. They thronged there from all parts,—from Paris, from Versailles, from the country, and from abroad. No traveller passed through France without wishing to visit these gardens of Armide; there was not one who did not leave them enraptured. Arthur Young, who cannot be suspected of partiality for the works of the ancient monarchy, and who examined everything with English phlegm and the practical sense of an agriculturist, was in ecstasy over the luxuriant vegetation and marvellous collections. He criticised the park as being somewhat crowded; but he acknowledged that much of it was very pretty and well done, and that the Temple of Love was "truly elegant."

More sensible, as they said in those days, Karamsine, the Russian, declared that the garden of Trianon was the most beautiful of all English gardens.

"I advance," he said, "and I see hills, fields, meadows, herds, a grotto. Fatigued by the splendours of art, I turn to nature; I find myself, my heart, my imagination; I breathe, inhaling the perfumed air of the evening, gazing at the setting sun. . . . I would like to stop it in its course, in order to remain longer at Trianon."

The Baroness von Oberkirche, who accompanied the Comtesse du Nord to France, is not less enthusiastic:—

"I went early in the morning to visit the queen's Little Trianon. What a charming promenade! How delicious were the glades, perfumed with lilacs and peopled with nightingales! The weather was magnificent; the air was full of fragrant mist; butterflies spread their golden wings beneath the rays of the spring sun. I have never passed more delightful moments than the three hours spent in visiting that retreat."

After these opinions,—that of the somewhat sceptical Englishman, of the sentimental Russian, and of the Alsatian,—do you wish to hear the judgment of a connoisseur, of a master in the delicate art of the decoration of gardens? Here is what the Prince de Ligne, the creator of Belœil, and one of the frequenters of Trianon, wrote in 1781:—

"I know nothing more beautiful or better executed than the temple and the pavilion. The colonnade of the one and the interior of the other are the height of perfection, in taste and in sculpture. The rocks and the waterfalls will produce a superb effect in a short time, for I think that the trees will hasten to grow in order to enhance the contrast of the buildings, the water, and the turf. The river is charming in a little stretch of straight line toward the temple; the rest of its course is hidden or seen, as desirable. The clumps of trees are well distributed, and separate the objects which would otherwise be too near. There is a perfect grotto, well situated, and exceedingly natural. The hills are not sugar loaves, or ridiculous amphitheatres. There is not one that does not look as if it had been there from the time of Pharaoh. The beds of flowers are agreeably placed. There was one which I thought looked a little too much like a ribbon; it should, I think, be changed. It was the only defect I noticed, which proves that although Little Trianon may be made for enthusiasts, it is not enthusiasm which excites me. There is nothing finicky, sought after; nothing bizarre. All the forms are agreeable. Everything is in perfect and correct taste. Apparently the Graces have much sense, and add this advantage to those others which make them admired."

In the palace there was the same elegance, and to use the Prince de Ligne's term, the same correctness. One ascended by an ample *perron*, with a double flight of steps, to the terraces, ornamented with balustrades. On passing the door, one entered a vestibule where garlands of oak ran along the walls. A head of Medusa seemed to forbid the approach of those who were disagreeable. For others, for the privileged ones, a vast staircase with stone steps and a gilt hand-rail, whereon branches of laurel were intertwined with the monogram of the goddess of the place, invited entrance. In the centre hung a marvellous lantern, made of bundles of arrows and attributes of country life, lighted by twelve lights borne by little satyrs, seated.

From the antechamber which opened from the head of the staircase one passed into the dining-room, whose wainscoting, admirably sunk, offered on all sides a succession of fine arabesques, quivers, arrows, garlands of flowers, branches of laurel, sphinxes, baskets of fruits; the goats of Pan, with beards of ivy leaves, upheld the mantel of blue marble. In the middle of the room was the table made by Loriot for Louis XV., which rose, already served, through a trap-door in the floor, with its four *servants*, discreet auxiliaries, that took the place of and did away with the eager attention and the importunate gaze of valets.

Beyond the dining-room came the small salon, decorated every-

where with bunches of grapes, with masks of comedy, with guitars and tambourines. In the large salon smiling and chubby Cupids played together at the angles of the cornice, while on the walls branches of lilies blossomed within wreaths of laurel. The furniture was of scarlet silk with gold *galon*. From the rosette, so delicate and so light that its clusters of flowers and fruits seemed scarcely fixed to the ceiling, was suspended a crystal chandelier, shining with a thousand lights. In the dressing-room two movable mirrors, rising from the floor at will, shut off and masked the windows. Above was a small library, built in the *entresol* in 1780; on one side, the bath-room, where the water poured into a tub of white marble.

A little boudoir, deliciously sculptured, with smoking tripods, cornucopias, doves lighting in nests of roses, shields covered with *fleur de lis*, monograms (M. A. pierced by harmless arrows and framed with daisies), led to the bedchamber of the queen, whose furniture in blue silk — that colour so becoming to blondes — was comfortably stuffed with eider-down, whose bed was hidden beneath lace, whose curtains were held back with satin bands fringed with pearls and silver. A garland of forget-me-nots and poppies encircled the ceiling, and on the mantel a clock bearing the Austrian eagles and the crook and hat of a shepherd marked the happy hours of the sovereign of this place. Along the walls were some canvases of Pater and of Watteau, and two charming pictures presented by Maria Theresa, wherein Wertmüller had represented two scenes which recalled her daughter's childhood, — the opera and the ballet executed by the archdukes and archduchesses at the marriage of Joseph II. In one, the sisters of the queen were giving a scene from an opera; in the other, she who was then called Madame Antoine, dressed in a red bodice and a skirt of white satin, flowered with rose branches, was dancing a minuet with her brothers, Ferdinand and Maximilian. A contemporary asserts that there were also at Trianon, in the bedchamber of the queen, several portraits of the imperial family, in which, I know not from what lugubrious fancy, the august personages had had themselves represented as monks digging their graves. Was this in order to introduce a serious thought in the midst of so many smiling fancies, and the image of death amid those emblems of pleasure? Was it the moral of the poem?

Everywhere else in the palace life abounded; everywhere appeared those graceful attributes that symbolized the character of

the queen during her days of happiness, — simplicity and charm. It was there that the style which has been called Louis XVI. blossomed in all its perfection, but which we would rather call the style of Marie Antoinette, for it was she who was the inspiration of it, — an exquisite style, which has remained during a century the standard of elegance and grace. It was there that the influence of the queen on the taste and art of her time was evident. It was no longer the severe grandeur of Louis XIV. nor the affected decoration of Louis XV.; it was a mean between these two, uniting the purity of line of the one with the delicacy of decoration of the other; solid, with an appearance of fragility, both graceful and dignified, harmonious without being affected, rounded without being contorted, comfortable without being voluptuous. Mythological emblems, attributes of art and nature, sylvan scenes, Renaissance arabesques, emblems and symbols, flowers, fruit, and foliage, — all united in an ornamentation which shines above all by the abundance and delicacy of its details. The defamers of Marie Antoinette have accused her of remaining German; she was never more French than at Trianon.

At her call all imaginations were set to work, all the arts met to conceive master-pieces. Deschamps sculptured the pediments of the Belvedere and the capitals of the Temple. Feret and Lagrenée painted the ceiling and walls of the theatre and of the palace; Dutemps and Leriche gilded them. For the queen, Gouttière — the celebrated Gouttière, as he was called even during his lifetime — chiselled marvellous bronzes, Houdon cut marble, Clodion made his statuettes. Under her patronage, Lebœuf founded a porcelain factory in the Rue de Bondy. David Roetgers designed furniture of such perfection that Louis XVI., the economical Louis XVI., was tempted to buy a *marquetrie* writing-desk for eighty thousand francs. Rosewood and violet-ebony were used with panels and plaques of Sèvres; the consoles and tables were heaped with a mass of rare and elegant objects, — groups in *pâte tendre* or *dure*, jars from China of blue porcelain, vases from Vienna in petrified wood, caskets of brown sardonyx or red jasper, boxes of Japanese lacquer or of *vernis Martin.* All was gay; all was exquisite.

It was not only at Trianon that the fancies of the young sovereign had free play, but also at Fontainebleau. Nothing is more graceful than the suite of rooms which constituted the apartments of the queen in the old palace of the Valois. Mercy,

who saw them in their freshness, declared that artists of all kinds had exhausted all that magnificence, research, and taste could produce of the most curious and most agreeable. All vied with one another in decorating them; for the bedchamber, Lyons sent a most wonderful silk covered with rustic attributes, — rustic pipes, red partridges running in the fields, goldfinches singing on branches of flowers, baskets of fruit, and ruins of temples. The architect Rousseau directed the works; Gouttière placed on the chest of drawers charming decorations of bronze, clusters of grapes, heads of lions, scrolls of all sorts. Sèvres added its transparent medallions. On the bed two gilded genii supported a crown above the intertwined monogram of Marie Antoinette.

In the salon, a pupil of Boucher, Barthélemy, painted music and the arts. In the bath-room he painted charming decorations on the mirrors. Gay Cupids, fresh and rosy, teased one another, chased one another, tumbling about, running after butterflies, catching birds, playing with flowers, and climbing up the rose-bushes.

But the marvel at Fontainebleau was the boudoir; and Madame de Staël was right when she wrote to Gustavus III. that the queen's boudoir in all its details was beautiful beyond all that could be imagined. There again the decorator was Barthélemy. On the ceiling he painted Flora surrounded by Cupids, distributing a profusion of the perfumed products of her rich parterres. On the walls he lavished the most charming creations of his brush; it was a mixture of Cupids, animals, and flowers, of branches of ivy, and of heads of lions, of crouching sphinxes and wreaths of bluets, marguerites, violets, and laurel. Over the doors, Cupid held a mirror for his mother, and groups of young girls danced before a satyr, or held by his wings a love who was seeking to escape. The mantel, in white marble, was held by sheaves of arrows forming columns; and on the lintel was a wreath chiselled by Gouttière, made up of garlands of foliage and flowers. If we may believe tradition, Louis XVI. himself forged the fastenings for the windows, on the mountings of which branches of ivy climbed; Vulcan this time worked for Venus. The floor was entirely of spotted mahogany, a very rare wood then, which to-day produces a sinister impression; the red spots look like blood-stains.

But let us return to Trianon.

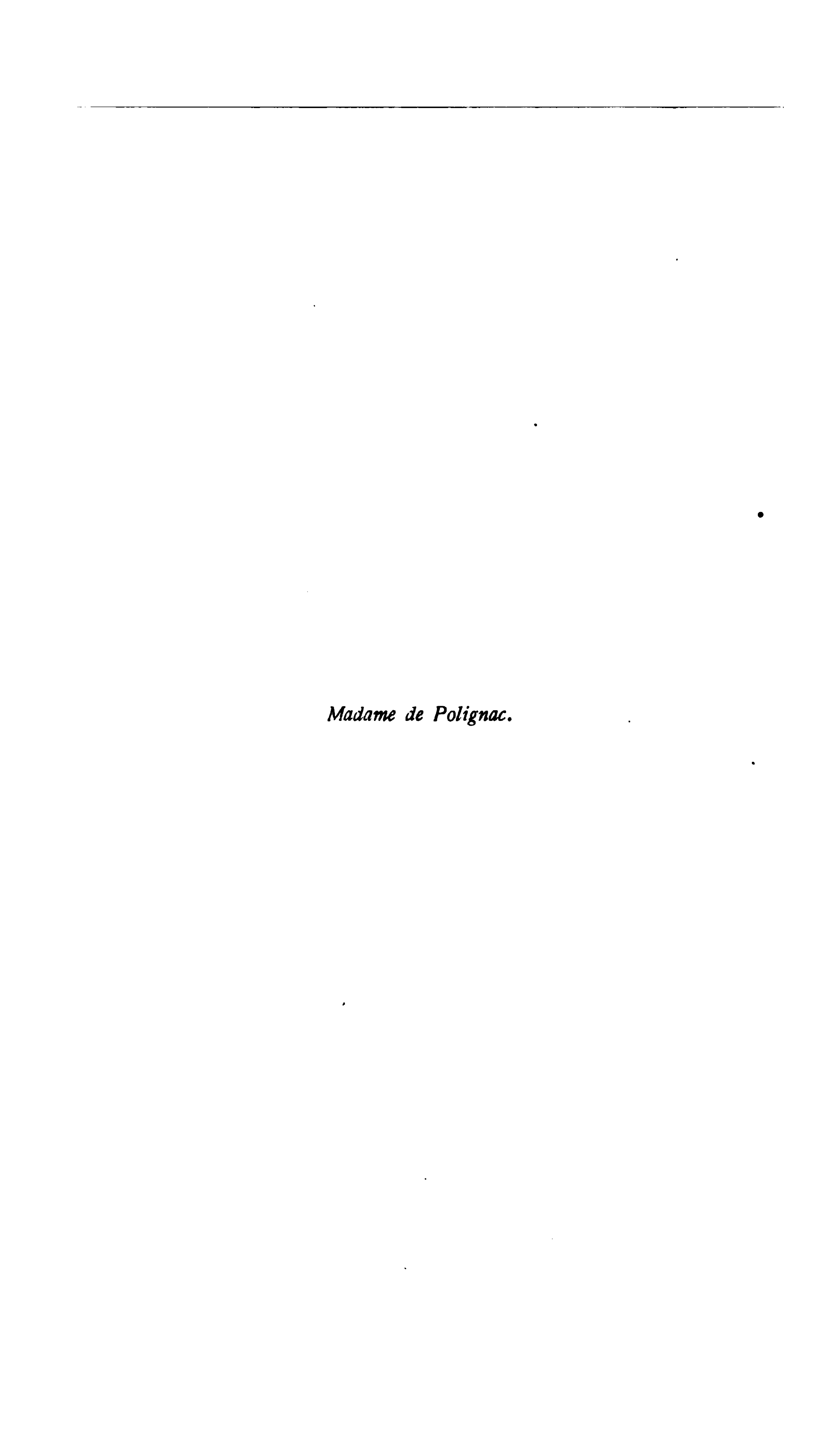
The kingdom of Marie Antoinette was small; about sixty

acres composed the garden. The house was still smaller; it was hardly twelve fathoms long. In the interior, besides the apartments of the mistress of the place, which we have just described, there only remained on the second floor a few low and small rooms, which were almost servants' rooms. It was indeed the house of a philosopher, which could contain only a limited number of friends, and that was just what the queen desired. She had created Trianon to escape from Versailles and Marly; she wished to be alone there with a few guests of her choice. She was no longer the sovereign of a vast empire, but the proprietress of a small domain; it was the charm of private life after the fret of public life. There she was absolute mistress, and also chief justice; but her justice was tempered with mercy. "As for the man whom you hold in prison for the depredation committed, I beg you will release him," she wrote one day; "and since the king tells me that he is my prisoner, I will pardon him."

The simplicity she had dreamed of, the life of the affections, to which she had aspired since her childhood, the country existence, whose emblems were spread everywhere about her, — this was what she sought to realize at Trianon. It was there that she could say with Henry IV., "I am no longer queen; I am myself." In the morning she left Versailles, accompanied only by a footman; she visited her garden and her flowers; she gathered bouquets of roses and of ivy; and when in the evening she remained to sleep in her little château, the wife of the *concierge* served her as waiting-woman. On Sunday she allowed every one who was decently dressed to enter the park, principally nurse-maids and children. She organized balls there, rustic balls, sometimes under a tent, as in a village, sometimes in the barn of the hamlet; the queen herself took part, dancing a *contre-danse*, to put every one at ease. Then she called the nurse-maids, had all the children presented to her, inquired about their families, and overwhelmed them with bonbons and caresses. She loved children so dearly, and wished so much to have one herself, that at the end of 1776 she adopted a little peasant, whose happy face and good-humour had struck her. She gave other entertainments there; and one day the park was transformed into a sort of fair-ground, where the ladies of the court were the merchants, and where the queen was lemonade-girl, with theatres, shows, and booths bordering the avenues. She organized journeys to Trianon, not such journeys as those to Marly, which were so expensive and so pompous, but







Madame de Polignac.

journeys when she installed herself with a few of her intimate friends only; for, as we have said, the house was small, and did not admit of a large number. Madame Elisabeth was always there, then Madame de Polignac and her set, more rarely Madame de Lamballe. The king came on foot without his captain of the guards, but never slept there. Monsieur appeared sometimes, the Comte d'Artois often. The guests arrived at two o'clock for dinner, and returned to Versailles before midnight.

At Trianon there was no ceremony, no etiquette, no household, only friends. When the queen entered the salon, the ladies did not quit their work, nor the men interrupt their game of billiards or of *trictrac*. It was the life of the château, with all its agreeable liberty, such as Marie Antoinette had always dreamed, such as was practised in that patriarchal family of the Hapsburgs, which was, as Goethe has said, "Only the first *bourgeoise* family of the empire." They all met together for breakfast, which took the place of dinner; afterward they played cards, chatted, or walked, and assembled again for supper, which was served early. No fine dressing, no complicated head-dresses, whose exaggerated height had forced the architect to enlarge the dimensions of the doors, and provoked the reprimands of Maria Theresa. A dress of white percale, a gauze fichu, a straw hat,—such was the toilet at Trianon; a fresh and charming toilet, which set off admirably the supple figure and brilliant complexion of the goddess of the place, but whose extreme simplicity enraged the manufacturers of silk at Lyons, deserted for the linens of Alsace. There were no more noisy amusements, no more ruinous faro that drained the purse of the queen, none of those little games, a taste for which had been cultivated at the house of the Duchesse de Duras, such as blind-man's-buff and hide-and-seek, which had aroused the ire of the chroniclers. At Versailles and at Marly there were court amusements; at Trianon they enjoyed the pleasures of the country,—open-air balls, like those we have just spoken of, a dance on the grass, billiards, the roundabout, and rides over the turf.

The queen took her rôle of farmer seriously; she had her cows, Brunette and Blanchette, and milked them herself in porcelain jars; she had a beautiful white goat with four horns, and white lambs which had been brought from Freiburg; she had her pigeons and her hens, which she fed; she had her parterres, which she watered. From the dairy one passed to the barn, from

the barn to the mill; one ate fresh eggs at the farm, and drank warm milk at the barn; one fished in the river or floated upon the lake in a gondola, and when tired of such occupation returned to sit in the shade and breathe the perfume of flowers while one worked; for no one was idle at Trianon. The women embroidered, worked tapestry, or plied their distaffs; the men made nets, read, or walked and chatted, — a charming life, where time passed without one's perceiving it, and where the fatigues and intrigues of Versailles were forgotten; a still more charming life after God had granted the most ardent desires of the queen, and the aureole of maternity shone upon her head. For then it was not only repose and friendship which she sought at Trianon, but the health of her children, who played joyously upon the lawns, teased their lambs, hunted nests, hoed their gardens, breathed the open air, developed in all liberty, and gained from that liberty and the open air a vigorous and healthy mien. After this epoch, Trianon became more the vogue than ever, and there was hardly a day when the queen did not go to it from Versailles, either in the morning or the afternoon. It was there that she went to complete her convalescence after the severe and dramatic confinement at the birth of Madame Royale; it was there that she watched the dauphin in the arms of Madame Poitrine, — the dauphin, whose birth softened her grief at the death of Maria Theresa, and whose name the poets, with a delicate flattery that went to the heart of the mother, associated in their praises of the groves which shaded his first steps.

Such were her private pleasures; but besides these, there were official entertainments, such as fall to the lot of crowned heads. No sovereign, no great personage, came to France without the queen's desiring herself to do the honours of her domain. Whether it was Joseph II., the prince of Hesse-Darmstadt, the Comte du Nord, or the king of Sweden, there was always an entertainment in their honour at Trianon. It made in some sort a part of the ordinary programme of the amusements which were offered to foreigners of distinction. Then there were less noisy entertainments, such as she gave to the king, who appreciated them greatly; for he loved ceremony and pomp no better than his wife. Trianon for him, as for the queen, meant simplicity, and also economy in comparison with Fontainebleau and Marly. Sometimes a few nobles were invited, or a few ladies of the court, like Madame la Maréchale de Noailles, the Duchesse de Cossé,

the Marquise de Sabran, often even ladies from Paris. The avenues were then illuminated with those coloured lanterns which gave so soft a light and so delicate a shadow that, as an eyewitness has said, "the water, the trees, and the people all seemed ethereal."

After the illumination there was supper, spectacle, ballet, or walks in the garden, which were prolonged often quite late into the night. But what made these assemblies most attractive was the affability of the queen. She exerted her ingenuity to show her guests attention; and each one departed enchanted with the place and its delights, and still more with the kindness and graciousness of the proprietress. Mercy himself, who had looked with distrust on certain innovations introduced at these entertainments, acknowledged that they were charming by reason of the amiability of the queen. "Provided that they do not become too frequent or too expensive," he added, "they can only aid in establishing good form at the court, and a species of amusement which is fitting."

Nor were there walks only at Trianon; one talked and read. Although Madame Campan has asserted that Marie Antoinette did little for literature and the arts, it is certain that she had a taste for intellectual pleasures, and that it gave her pleasure to encourage authors. She extended her protection to La Harpe, and had him given a pension of twelve hundred livres; she patronized De Lille, and out of gratitude the poet sang of the gardens of Trianon; she laughed at the funny verses of Gresset, and made a charming remark to the painter Vernet: "Monsieur Vernet, it is always you who make the fair weather and the rain;" she obtained a gift of twelve hundred livres for the great-nephew of Corneille, which admitted him to the Comédie Française; she had printed at her own expense at the royal printing-house a magnificent edition of the favourite poet of her childhood, Metastasio, and sent a copy to the illustrious writer. She applauded the "École des Pères," and after the representation, commanded the Maréchal de Duras to congratulate the author of the drama on the decent and moral tone noticeable in his work. She had Lemercier's "Meleager" played at the Comédie Française, was present at the first representation, and desired the young author to sit by her in her box, in order the better to enjoy a success of which she had no doubt, and which, in fact, did not disappoint her expectations. She granted a pension to Chamfort, and told

him of it in such flattering words that the author of "Mustapha and Zéangir," in his enthusiasm, swore a very fleeting oath that he should never forget it.

But she could not pardon Voltaire for his attacks on the ancient faith of France; and if she did not go so far as to regard him as an *extravagant*, as her mother did, she felt little sympathy for him. When, in the spring of 1788, that philosopher made a visit to Paris which was but one long triumph, she refused to receive him at Versailles. Indifferent to what the public might say, or the chroniclers affirm, and despite the solicitation of the friends of Voltaire, she declared that she would have nothing to do with a man whose morality had occasioned so many troubles and inconveniences. This fact has been contested; it is positive to-day.

Her judgments, however, were not always so inflexible, nor her liking, like her literary repugnances, so well founded. If one day, on reading Florian's "Numa Pompilius," she let fall the piquant and true expression, "I seem to be eating milk-soup," at other times her opinion was not so correct, as happened in the case of that play of Dorat-Cubières, which, although found charming when Mole read it in the queen's boudoir, was pronounced so bad on its representation at Fontainebleau that the king for the first time ordered the curtain to be lowered before the end of the comedy; or in the case of the "Connétable de Bourbon" by the Comte de Guibert, which, despite royal protection, failed so lamentably at the marriage of Madame Clotilde. But the queen made no pretensions, and was the first to laugh at her mistakes.

Among so many amusements, wherein was evident a fancy often fickle, there was one taste which was constant, — her love of music. Marie Antoinette had manifested it from her youth. As a child she had played with Mozart, and had received lessons from Gluck. As dauphiness, on her arrival in France, she had studied the harpsichord every day, had given little concerts in her apartment, had sung with Madame Clotilde, and had amused herself with playing on the harp. As queen, in the midst of those diversions which her mother reproached her for, she continued her music lessons and her concerts. The lessons often lasted two hours, and the concert of the evening served as a repetition of the morning's lesson. Her progress was real, and her pleasure so lively that Mercy feared it might be prejudicial to more serious occupations. Even at Fontainebleau, which was the

scene of her greatest dissipation, — the young woman herself avows it, — she had two professors of music, one for the harp and another for singing. At Paris she went from preference to the opera, and to the Comédie Italienne; and it was also to please her that the opera consented to bring the celebrated "Capelmeister," Gluck, from Vienna.

Gluck was for Marie Antoinette more than a great composer, he was the embodiment of a memory, of a memory of her youth and of her country, and also of a hope of a reform in French art, which she found monotonous. From the start she encouraged him; she took him under her high protection; she had his "Iphigenia in Aulis" studied, and on the day when the piece was finally given, on April 19, 1774, she applauded it until it looked as if she wished to create a cabal. She had a pension of six thousand francs given to the illustrious author; she protected him against his enemies; she supported him by her applause, despite the coldness of the spectators, at the first representation of "Alcestis;" and when a hostile coterie sent for Piccini, in order to oppose him to Gluck, and when the fickle public seemed to abandon the German composer for the Italian master, she took the part of the teacher of her youth. On his arrival, she granted him entrance to her toilet, and so long as he remained there, did not cease to talk to him; she questioned him kindly about his work, and the great musician, in whom the malice of critics had not shaken his own faith in his genius, replied to her with imperturbable self-possession, "Madame, 'Armid' will soon be finished, and will be truly superb." Despite a first undecided reception, the public applause soon justified the confidence of Gluck and the protection of the queen. The Prince d'Henin, he who was called the dwarf of princes, permitted himself to interrupt Gluck cavalierly at the house of Sophie Arnould; the Duc de Nivernais took up the gauntlet in order to please his sovereign, and if the affair was arranged, it was because the prince, to whom Marie Antoinette sent word that she knew whence came the insult and insinuated that he must repair it, consented to visit the composer, which visit was an apology. When the Duc de Noailles, who was more talented and less lively than the Prince d'Henin, cried that the "Electra" of Lemoyne was not worth twopence, since the author was a pupil of Gluck, it was the queen herself who undertook the defence of teacher and pupil against the old courtier.

When at the end of five years, the great man, embittered and discouraged by the failure of "Echo et Narcisse," prepared to leave Paris, his royal pupil made him promise to return, and conferred upon him as a parting gift the title of music-master to the Children of France.

But the queen was not exclusive; she not only protected Gluck, but also received his rival, Piccini, whom she even pardoned for having received for a moment the support of Madame du Barry. She made use of the struggle between the two composers to give French music a new impetus; while preserving her preferences, she distributed her favours to both of them. Piccini had scarcely arrived in France before she received him; she took singing lessons of him twice a week, and gave him, with the title of composer of her lyrical spectacle, a salary of four thousand livres, which he was still drawing at the beginning of the Revolution. She was anxious to hear the first two acts of "Roland," which she had him rehearse in her presence. The Prince de Ligne relates that, wishing to sing before her Italian master, whom she begged to accompany her, she inadvertently chose a piece from Gluck's "Alcestis." But, the prince added, "the grace with which she repaired these mistakes, which she often made, and a sort of ingenuousness which became her well, proved the goodness and the sensibility of a beautiful soul, and added a charm to her face, whose blushes accompanied her pretty regrets, excuses, and often also her good deeds."

Besides Gluck and Piccini, there was Grétry, whose light music pleased her infinitely. She consented to be godmother to the composer's daughter; she gave her her name; she had her come every month to Versailles, where she overwhelmed her with caresses and presents; and when she went to the theatre, after the three reverences which etiquette required her to make to the public, her eyes sought her little goddaughter, and she threw a kiss to her, to the applause of the spectators.

And later, when Gluck had definitely deserted Paris for Vienna, and even the most pressing royal appeals could not recall him, it was Sacchini whom the queen upheld energetically for a time against the secret opposition of the committee of the opera and the malevolence of the manager of the Menus-Plaisirs, Papilion de la Ferté, — Sacchini, whose "Dardanus" was to be given for the first time on the stage at Trianon.

There was also Lemoyne, whom she honoured with her favour

at the same time as Sacchini; there was Saliéri, a pupil of Gluck, whose "Danaides," attributed to the collaboration of the master, took the queen to the opera, eager to applaud a new master-piece of her old professor. Madame Campan no doubt exaggerates when she attributes to Marie Antoinette the degree of excellence to which French music then attained. But it is certain that she contributed much by her patronage to lift our lyrical stage from its old routine, and to infuse new spirit into it. Her taste was not always as infallibly correct as her friends claimed, but it is none the less true — a competent critic has recognized it — that among the works which she honoured with her protection, she seldom made a bad choice or judged incorrectly.

After the composers came the artists. The queen showed great kindness to Saint-Huberty, who deserved it, if not by his character, at least by his talent. She had granted to Mademoiselle Trial fifteen hundred livres of annual pension. When Garat arrived from Bordeaux at the age of sixteen, and created a sensation in Paris, she wished immediately to hear him; she sent for him in a carriage with six horses; she obtained for him, from the king's purse, a pension of six thousand livres to pay his debts; she even carried her condescension so far — she repented of it later — as to sing with him. She also received Michu from the Comédie Française; she admitted him to her intimacy, and manifested an extreme pleasure in listening to him; she not only listened to him, but took lessons from him; and it was owing to these lessons that she passed from music to a new amusement, whither we must follow her, and which leads us again to Trianon, — the stage.

While Marie Antoinette was still quite young she had shown a lively taste for the stage. While she was still only dauphiness, she had, if you remember, organized with her brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law some little representations in her private apartment; and only the fear of the old king had put an end to the amusement, which greatly diverted the young people. After she became queen, she renounced for a time her desire to appear upon the stage, but she preserved her love for the theatre. At Marly, a stage was improvised in a barn, and Montansier went there to play. At Trianon, after the theatre had been built in 1778, there was no entertainment without a play. At Choisy, during their little visits, there was a play almost every day and sometimes twice a day. In the morning opera, and French or

Italian comedy at the usual hour; in the evening, at eleven o'clock, parodies were given, where the chief actors of the opera appeared in the most bizarre rôles and costumes. A celebrated dancer, named Guimard, took the principal part. Her extreme thinness and little cracked voice added to the grotesqueness of the personages whom she imitated. But the queen had little taste for that sort of diversion, of which, on the other hand, Louis XVI. was very fond. Her delicate and refined nature was ill in accord with those parodies, which were often vulgar. "Is that all?" she asked, yawning, after the representation on the stage at Versailles of a farce entitled, "Les Battus paient l'Amende," which had been a great success at Paris.

Private theatricals were then more the fashion than ever. At all great houses, in all the châteaux, there was a theatre and a company of amateurs organized like any real company, practising like them, rehearsing like them, and taking lessons from actors of renown. From the court the contagion passed to the army, and an ordinance from the minister of war was necessary to put a stop to an amusement to which the officers seemed about to sacrifice their profession.

Certain great nobles had, besides their usual residences, a little house in the country, situated in the midst of gardens, and especially designed for dramatic representations. The Duc d'Orléans, the grandson of the Regent, had a theatre of this sort at Bagnolet in the Faubourg du Roule; and it was there that the greatest number of the comedies of Collé were given, in which the pious husband of Madame de Montesson did not disdain to accept a part. The Prince de Condé had the same at Chantilly, and Madame Elisabeth herself played "Nanine" with her friends.

What the princes of the blood did, and what the great king had authorized by his example, Marie Antoinette wished also to do. The war at that period kept all the officers away from Versailles; the summer had sent a great number of the courtiers to their châteaux; amusements became rare at court. The queen bethought herself of this new means to break the monotony of an existence which dragged painfully. Like the Duc d'Orléans, she resolved to have and had her company. We have described the theatre above. The company was made up of the intimates of the Polignac set: first, the favourite; her daughter, the Duchesse de Guiche; her cousin, Madame de Châlons; her sisters-in-law, the Comtesse Diane and the Comtesse de Polas-



tron. Madame Campan recounts that it was agreed that, with the exception of the Comte d'Artois, no man should be admitted to the company. If this resolution was taken, it was not kept; for from the first we find among the actors the Comte d'Adhémar, the Comte Esterhazy, and Monsieur de Polignac, who were soon joined by the Comte de Vaudreuil, the Duc de Guiche, and the Bailiff of Crussol. The organizer of all the details was the secretary of the queen's commands, Monsieur Campan, to the great displeasure of the Duc de Fronsac, who saw therein an attack on his prerogatives as first gentleman of the chamber; he made a written appeal and received the following response: "You cannot be first gentleman when we are only actors. I have told you my wishes with regard to Trianon. I hold no court there; I live there as a private person, and Monsieur Campan will always be charged with the orders relative to the entertainments which I wish to give there." The duke would not acknowledge himself beaten, and whenever he went to the toilet of the queen, did not fail to let fall some remark against his "colleague," Campan. The queen shrugged her shoulders, and when he was gone, said, "It is distressing to find so petty a man in the son of the Maréchal de Richelieu."

The professors were Dazincourt, Caillot, a celebrated actor who had long since retired from the theatre, and Michu from the Comédie Italienne, — the first for comedy, the two others for comic opera.

When the august company thought themselves sufficiently perfect, they made their début on Aug. 1, 1780, and as a beginning attacked two of the pieces best known at that epoch, and wherein consequently comparison was the more dangerous with professional actors, — "Le Roi et le Fermier," by Sedaine and Monsigny, and "La Gageure Imprévue" by Sedaine. "The queen," Grimm says in his correspondence, speaking of this first representation, — "the queen, to whom no grace is foreign, and who knows how to adopt them all without losing her own, played in the first piece the rôle of Jenny, and in the second that of the soubrette." There were no spectators besides the king and the princes and princesses of the royal family without any following; in the parterre, the subordinate servants, such as waiting-women, footmen, and hussars, who found themselves at Trianon by reason of their service, — in all, about forty people. Through the praises, somewhat emphatic, of Grimm, and despite the inexperience of

the artists, it is easy to see that the success of the first entertainment was satisfactory. The king was greatly amused; the actors were enchanted. Ten days later they began again with a comic opera by Sedaine and Monsigny, "On ne s'avise jamais de tout," and the comedy by Barthe, "Les Fausses Infidélités," then on September 6, appeared in "L'Anglais à Bordeaux" and "Le Sorcier." This time the queen desired to have her sister-in-law, Madame, join the company, in order to give it credit in the eyes of the public. Madame asked nothing better, more perhaps from policy than from taste, but Monsieur formally forbade it. On the other hand, the king did not disguise the pleasure which he took in these diversions; he prolonged his evenings, and seemed in no hurry to retire at his ordinary hour, even assisting at the rehearsals, and when the queen performed her part, himself gave the signal for applause. The play lasted till nine o'clock, and was followed by a supper for the members of the royal family and the actors and actresses. On leaving the table, the court separated, and there were no late hours.

Encouraged by this approbation, they made another attempt on September 19. At the last moment the queen wished to put off the representation because of her daughter's indisposition. It was the king who declared that there was nothing alarming in the condition of the young princess, and that they must not change the amusement of the day. This time they chose two pieces that had created a sensation at the Comédie Italienne and at the opera: "Rose et Colas" by Sedaine and Monsigny, and the "Soothsayer of the Village," by Rousseau. In this last piece especially, they not only exposed themselves to comparison with the first artists of the opera, but evoked the dangerous memory of Madame de Pompadour's excellent company. The comparison, however, does not seem to have been too unfavourable. The Comte d'Adhémar indeed provoked some ironical smiles by his tremulous voice and white hair, somewhat out of place in the rôle of the shepherd Colin; and the queen had the right to say that it would be difficult even for malice to find anything to arraign in her choice of a lover. But the Comte de Vaudreuil, the best amateur actor of Paris, according to Grimm, played the part of the soothsayer very well; and Mercy, who was present at the representation in a grated *loge*, on Marie Antoinette's formal request, and who disapproved in his heart of this species of amusement, — Mercy wrote to Maria Theresa, who was also alarmed at this new amusement, —

"The queen has a very agreeable and correct voice; her manner of playing is noble and full of grace. On the whole, the play was as well given as it could be by any company of amateurs. I observed that the king followed it with an attention and pleasure that was manifest in his whole mien; during the *entr'actes*, he ascended the stage and went to the dressing-room of the queen."

The public was less good-natured than the king, and more exacting than Mercy. Hurt at being excluded from these private representations, they criticised them with bitterness; and the journals, always ill-disposed, fell with avidity upon the thousand anecdotes invented by the malcontents. It was related that the king, who, they said, was only present from amiability, did not hesitate to hiss his august consort. They asserted that the queen, annoyed at not having more spectators, had the body-guards enter; and that at the end of the evening, she had advanced to the front of the stage, and had so far forgotten her dignity as to say, "Gentlemen, I have done what I could to amuse you; I would have wished to act better in order to give you more pleasure." These anecdotes were false; the documents to-day allow us to affirm it; none the less they circulated among the people, and were the more acceptable in proportion as they were malicious and hurtful to the reputation of the queen.

The spectacle at Trianon was interrupted in 1781, owing to an indisposition of Marie Antoinette, or perhaps in consequence of Mercy's observation, but were begun again in 1782, with the "Sage étourdi" by Boissy, and the "Veillée villageoise," by Piis and Barré; in 1783 with the "Tonnelier" of Audinot, and the "Sabots" of Sedaine, then with "Isabelle and Gertrude" by Favart, and the "Deux Chasseurs et la Laitière" of Anseaume and Duni. The queen concerned herself with every detail; she superintended the least addition and had the scenes which seemed to her insufficient or worn out repainted. She was, in a word, the supreme director of her company, and showed herself jealous of her authority. "It seems to me," she wrote, "that my little company at Trianon should be exempt from the rules of ordinary service." The prudent severity with regard to the first representations became relaxed. The audience, which had at first been strictly limited to the royal family, and in the parterre to some waiting-women, was enlarged little by little. The door which in 1780 was closed even to the Princesse de Lamballe was finally

opened to some ladies of the court, then to the officers of the Life Guards, and the equerries of the king, and to his brothers. They had begun with forty spectators; they ended with two hundred.

What was in reality the artistic value of this company at Trianon? In the midst of so many contradictory opinions, some of them severe from malice, others laudatory, perhaps from flattery, it is difficult to form a judgment. It seems, however, that the criticism of Mercy was the most impartial: the company at Trianon was neither better nor worse than ordinary amateur companies. The Comte d'Artois displayed agreeable talent; the Comte de Vaudreuil proved himself a good actor. As for the queen, if one spectator, according to the testimony of Bachaumont, — but the anecdote appears untrustworthy, — said that her acting was royally bad, the Chevalier de Lille, a connoisseur, who saw her in the "Veillée villageoise," wrote that she played her part of Babet delightfully. It seems certain at all times that the august actors were more successful in comedy than in comic opera, nor had they any illusions on the subject of their lyrical capacities.

Was it their confidence in their talents as comedians that led them to attempt in 1775 the famous comedy of Beaumarchais, "The Barber of Seville"? "The Barber of Seville" was the last effort of the company; it was the closing of the theatre at Trianon, but that representation, which was an imprudence, belongs to darker days, and we are still in the period of happy days. We shall speak of it later, and for the present content ourselves with listening to the dull grumblings of the storm gathering in the distance.

Malice, which had not ceased to follow Marie Antoinette from her entrance into France, and pursue every act and word, attacked Trianon with especial bitterness, because more than anything else Trianon was herself. They affected to see in the embellishments which the queen bestowed upon her favourite residence one of the causes, even the principal cause, of the deficit in the treasury; and this rumour, started at Versailles in a little circle of malcontents, propagated at Paris and in the country, repeated its echoes in the requisitions of Fouquier-Tinville, even in the questions of Dumas, who at the Revolutionary tribunal catechised the queen upon "the millions sunk at Trianon." These millions reduced themselves to one and a half, or two at most, spread over fifteen years, from

1776 to 1790. It has been proved that the average expense necessitated by the creation or preservation of so many charming fancies scarely exceeded one hundred or one hundred and thirty livres a year; the total amount for the buildings did not reach more than five hundred thousand livres; the decoration has been estimated at not more than two hundred and fifty thousand livres. The account of the sculptor, Deschamps, for example, who covered the walls and pediments of those enchanting buildings with his arabesques, only amounted, from Oct. 6, 1777, to Sept. 15, 1786, to one hundred and thirteen thousand six hundred and sixty-five livres, and was not settled until Aug. 31, 1791. Mercy himself, who in his reports to Maria Theresa exhibited some alarm at what this new domain might cost the queen, only estimates the expense of the English park at one hundred and fifty thousand livres. A memorandum of Monsieur d'Angivilliers, preserved in the archives, confirms that in 1777 the total amount for making the garden at Trianon, which he said the queen was in a great hurry to enjoy, only reached three hundred and fifty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-five livres, ten sous, and ten deniers. If one wishes to enter into details, the keeping up of the gardens, which under Louis XV. exceeded thirty thousand livres, was in 1775 but twelve thousand; in 1777 but fifteen thousand, and in the end only six thousand four hundred and seventy-six thousand livres, and twelve sous; the Chinese pavilion and roundabout cost forty-one thousand livres; the rock whence sprang the river nine thousand; the Belvedere, that exquisite model, about sixty-five thousand. What is this in comparison with the expenditures of the financiers of the time, of Boutin at Tivoli, or of Laborde at Méréville? Even the theatre of the queen, which excited so much criticism, and with perhaps some justice, — that theatre with its small company, its limited orchestra, its choruses, its infrequent representations, — what was it compared to that of the Duchesse du Maine at Sceaux, and, above all, to that of the *Petits Cabinets* of Madame de Pompadour, which was kept up at the greatest expense, and which in six years had given not less than sixty works, many of which were repeated as many as five or six times?

We must avow, however, that if malice has greatly exaggerated the so-called prodigalities of the queen in her gracious domain, Trianon was none the less not without its disadvantages. Even the most devoted friends of Marie Antoinette regretted, and she her-

self regretted later, her taste for the theatre, which led her to consort with comedians, to receive their counsels, to play their parts. It seemed hardly compatible with the majesty of a throne that the queen should travesty herself as a soubrette. With regard to the public it was even worse. The people easily pardon expenditures, even follies, which they enjoy, while they are always disposed to exaggerate those in which they have no share. Excluded from the entertainments at Trianon, they regarded them as ruinous prodigalities, and as insults to their misery. Hence arose those malevolent stories which incriminated all the acts of Marie Antoinette, her walks, her words, her affections, which imputed to her a levity and an imaginary insolence, and which found such easy access to prejudiced minds. A few bundles of dry branches were burned to illuminate the park for the visit of Joseph II.; public opinion was immediately aroused against this unheard-of excess, and the three thousand fagots were transformed in popular imagination to an entire forest.

The court was not less incensed. Those who were not invited to Trianon were jealous of those who were admitted. The exclusive favour shown to a few persons hurt those who did not partake of it. The ladies of the palace whose service only necessitated their appearance on Sundays and state days at the toilet of the queen and at the services of the church, were loud in their complaints, not only against those who had entrance to Trianon, but against the princess who bestowed her favours so unequally. Jealousy turned their heads, and gave birth to a sort of "alienation," as Mercy said. No one went to Trianon; but neither did they go to Versailles.

Court was hardly held; the palace became a desert. Versailles, the theatre of the magnificence of Louis XIV., whither persons had eagerly thronged from all parts of Europe to take lessons in politeness and good taste, became, a contemporary has said, only little country town, whither one went with reluctance, and whence one fled as quickly as possible. Ambition and cupidity were none the less active, but one sought rather to gain protectors among the personages in power, and favours were only obtained second-hand. Thus authority was weakened at the moment that disaffection began, and respect was lost. When the king, yielding to his love of simplicity and solitude, countenanced the amusements of Trianon, and a form of society which was too limited for a nation as lively, eager, and fond of splendour as the French, he

did not see that in affecting the habits and existence of a private man he said to his people, accustomed to pompous etiquette, and to the traditions of majesty, not only of Louis XIV., but even of Louis XV., that their successor had neither the tastes nor virtues of a monarch. When the queen, who seemed destined by nature to occupy the first throne of the world, escaped from her duties of receiving to open her heart to Madame de Polignac, and to shut herself up with her at Trianon, the courtiers, envious of a partiality which seemed to them exclusive, spied upon the least grace accorded to the favourite, attributed to her influence the actions of the queen, and to the queen's influence the resolutions of government, and held Marie Antoinette responsible for the elevation of the one and the discomfiture of the other, for the deficit in the treasury, for the increase in taxes, and heaped upon her head those tempests of unpopularity and those storms of rage whose first flashes disturbed Mercy, wrung tears from Maria Theresa on her death-bed, and brought upon the young and imprudent sovereign the severe and sometimes brutal remonstrances of her brother, Joseph II.

CHAPTER XV.

JOSEPH II.'S JOURNEY TO FRANCE. — CHARACTER OF THE EMPEROR; HIS PLAN OF THE JOURNEY FORMED, ABANDONED, TAKEN UP AGAIN. — THE QUEEN'S JOY ON SEEING HER BROTHER. — FIRST INTERVIEWS. — REPRIMANDS OFTEN MALADROIT. — THE EMPEROR AND THE QUEEN AT THE OPERA. — VISITS TO THE MONUMENTS AND PRINCIPAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE CITY OF PARIS. — AFFECTATION OF SIMPLICITY. — ENTHUSIASM OF THE PUBLIC. — DEPARTURE OF THE EMPEROR; HIS OPINION OF THE QUEEN. — ADVICE WHICH HE LEFT HER IN WRITING. — THE QUEEN CONFORMS TO IT DURING A TIME, THEN FALLS AGAIN INTO DISSIPATION. — WHY?

IT had been a long time since Joseph II. had formed the project of going to France. In the very year of the dauphiness's marriage, he had informed his ambassador, the Comte de Mercy, of his intention.

This prince possessed an inquiring but ill-balanced mind, was obstinate rather than firm, had more vivacity than good sense, conceived vast plans, but did not mature them, had a passion for little things, and lost himself in details, — "governed too much," as the Prince de Ligne said, "but did not reign enough,"— used the language of a liberal with the conduct of an absolute monarch, and spoiled really good qualities by his unfortunate defects. With the desire to learn, he had not the patience to study. "His questions," Gleichen said, "seemed to seek counsel, but usually only sought to find advice that accorded with his own views." On the death of his father in 1765, he became emperor, and distressed his mother by his restless interference, his unquiet precipitation, his mania for change, his philosophical Utopias, his feverish ambition, which neither the vigour of his talents, the clearness of his views, nor his force of character warranted. He sincerely desired the happiness of his people, but desired it as a theorist rather than as a practical man, and only succeeded in elevating them by vexatious reforms, which were repugnant to their traditions, to their customs, and to their beliefs. Fourteen

years older than Marie Antoinette, he assumed toward her the attitude of a father, spoke to her with the authority of experience, but he too often counteracted the wisdom of his advice by his dryness of tone and brusqueness of manner. He forgot too readily that the child he had lectured at Vienna was grown up, that the dauphiness was become queen. The young princess, though usually docile and deferential toward the brother whom she loved dearly, sometimes rebelled against his dominating airs, and the sarcastic lessons of a mentor who insisted upon writing to her in German and treating her as a little girl. These were, however, only passing clouds. Their correspondence soon resumed its affectionate tone; and it was in great part the desire to see Marie Antoinette that determined the emperor to visit France,— a country which he did not love, and against which he, together with all the principal nobles of his court, nourished invincible prejudices. To see the queen, to study her character and conduct, to make the personal acquaintance of the king, to judge of the situation of the court for the present and the future, to observe all that a great monarchy can offer of interest in matters of resource, administration, agriculture, finance, commerce, marine, and military,—such were the principal objects, according to his own avowal, which the emperor proposed to himself; such were the fruits which he counted on gathering from his voyage.

Marie Antoinette was exceedingly happy at the thought of seeing her brother; he was for her an image of her country, a living portrait of her mother. But this joy, it must be said, was not unalloyed with some disquietude. What would Joseph II. think of the court of France? What would he think of the king? Above all, what would he think of the society of the queen, and of the manner of life which she had adopted? What would be his sentence? What might he not perhaps reprove,—he who had one day written so severe a letter to his sister that Maria Theresa was obliged to prevent him from sending it? Might there not result bitternesses, coldnesses, perhaps even an open rupture? Such were Marie Antoinette's apprehensions and Mercy's fears.

This journey of Joseph II.—which was several times abandoned and taken up again, then put off at the last moment because of the rigour of the winter and the political occurrences in Bohemia and Germany; which was disapproved of by Maria Theresa, who was not informed of it until after every one else— did not finally take place until the spring of 1777. The emperor

had resolved upon maintaining the most strict incognito in France, to the great grief of the queen, who would have wished to have her brother received according to his rank, as a great and powerful monarch, and to the great annoyance of the empress, who loved not his affectation of simplicity, which was more apparent than real. His decision in this respect had been official. No lodging in the palace at Versailles nor at Trianon; at Paris an apartment with the ambassador, at the Petit Luxembourg, but all appearance of official reception was to be avoided; at Versailles, two rooms in an *hôtel garni*, the Hôtel du Juste, which was decently furnished but without elegance; at the château a small chamber in the queen's *entresol*, where he could take a few moments' rest during the day. No state coach, only a simple hired carriage.

On Wednesday, April 18, at half-past seven in the evening, Joseph II. arrived at Paris, under the name of the Count von Falkenstein. On the following morning at eight o'clock he set out for Versailles. In default of Mercy, who was kept in bed by an indisposition, the Abbé de Vermond received the emperor on his descent from the carriage, and conducted him alone by a secret staircase to the room where the queen awaited him. "I desire," Joseph II. had written, "that she should await me in her boudoir without coming to meet me, and that there, in order to avoid a scene before others, we should be alone, to manifest to each other the pleasure which we have in seeing each other again." This pleasure was great; the meeting was touching. The brother and sister embraced each other tenderly, and remained for a moment without speaking. Then their hearts opened, and the interview became lively and confidential. The emperor, contrary to all expectation, was tender and almost flattering. He said to the queen that if she were not his sister, and he could be united to her, he would not hesitate to marry again in order to gain so charming a companion. The young woman, the more touched by the compliment as she had not expected it, opened her heart and with unlooked-for abandon talked frankly of her situation, of her tastes, of her companions, only preserving a certain reticence on the subject of her favourites. The ice was broken; all embarrassment disappeared; the conversation, which was intimate and confidential on the part of Marie Antoinette, affectionate and discreet on the part of Joseph II., was prolonged. The queen afterward led her brother to the king; the two monarchs embraced; the king made a few remarks, which showed

his desire to appear cordial and sincere; the emperor was satisfied, and from the first moment succeeded in putting the king at his ease. Then after visits to the princes and princesses of the royal family, and to the ministers, after a supper in the queen's apartments, the Count von Falkenstein returned to sleep at Paris. Thus passed the first day.

During the following days the conversations between the emperor and the queen were renewed; sometimes at Trianon, in the intimacy of a solitary walk, sometimes at Versailles, Joseph II. took up in detail the subjects which he had already broached with his sister. He pointed out to her the dangers of her situation, drew a striking picture of the ease with which she allowed herself to be led on by her love of pleasure, and the deplorable consequences which her weakness would infallibly entail in the future, insisted upon the necessity of arresting herself on that declivity, of showing more deference toward the king, of giving up gaming, of applying herself to serious occupations, and, above all, shed a clear light upon the drawbacks of the queen's society. Of her set, the Duc de Coigny alone found grace before the emperor; while the prince judged harshly, even too harshly, of Madame de Lamballe, Madame de Polignac, and the Princesse de Guéménée, whose gambling-house he arraigned severely. The queen did not defend Madame de Lamballe, with whom she was then disenchanted, but she sought to pacify her brother on the score of Madame de Guéménée and Madame de Polignac. She acknowledged, moreover, without difficulty the justice of the emperor's reasons, for his discourse had really touched her and disposed her to serious reflections, and added that a day would come when she would follow such good advice. But owing to a feeling of pride she was reluctant to modify all at once her manner of life: she was afraid of seeming to yield to pressure. The public must not be able to say that the emperor had come from Austria to discipline and correct his little sister.

The manner of Joseph II. warranted but too well such fears on the part of the queen. Of an absolute and dominating character, and more disposed to criticism than leniency, the august dictator was not always able to retain the cordial and affectionate tone which Mercy had recommended to him, and to which he had at first adhered. He forgot too readily that he had to do with an ardent and proud queen, to whom it was necessary to use the language of reason and kindness, instead of the severity and

rudeness which were natural to him; and the queen, while recognizing the truth of her brother's observations, was often justly hurt by his manner of expressing them. It even happened to the emperor to give his sister a public lesson before several courtiers, and to say that if the king decided on visiting his kingdom, he need not bring his wife with him, "who was of no use to him." At another time he declared before Mercy, in a tone singularly hard, that if he were the husband of the queen, he should know how to direct her wishes, and to give them the form which he desired. Such remarks were not of a kind to please the princess. Her legitimate susceptibility rebelled against his pedantic tone and his maladroit authority. "I should take everything respectfully from my mother," she said; "but as for my brother, I shall know how to answer him." Hence coldnesses, bitternesses, and momentary ruptures, and that declaration which the queen made to the emperor, half laughingly, half angrily, that if he prolonged his sojourn in France they should have many hot disputes.

At bottom, however, she wished him to remain; for she loved him despite his brusqueness, and did not deny that his counsels had been of use to her. She did all she could to retain him. She gave him a watch ornamented with her portrait; she offered him an entertainment at Trianon,—"an entertainment which was very well arranged," Mercy writes, "and which was charming from the graciousness which the queen displayed toward every one." The king tried to be gay, and was as attentive to the emperor as his disposition allowed. The English park was lighted by pans of fire hidden among the flowers; and fagots burning behind the Temple of Love transformed it into a luminous drawing-room, whose brilliancy was reflected over the whole garden.

Marie Antoinette took her brother to the Comédie Française, and to the opera. At the latter, — it was on April 25, — Gluck's "Iphigenia in Aulis" was given. The emperor wished to remain hidden at the back of the box; but the queen seized him by the hand and dragged him toward the front, and the parterre burst into such acclamations that the opera was interrupted during some moments. When it was resumed, they sang the chorus, "Sing, let us celebrate our queen." It was Joseph II.'s turn to join the applause which greeted his sister, and the public's to say that if the archduke had somewhat alienated French hearts from their sovereign, the emperor had given them back to her.

The queen enjoyed this triumph and the growing popularity of her brother. Despite the care which the august traveller took to preserve his incognito, there were noisy demonstrations everywhere along his route. His hotel was surrounded by a numerous crowd; and wherever he went, a crowd followed him and importuned him. The people were charmed with the simplicity of a prince who walked on foot through the streets, without appanage or suite, dressed in a modest habit of green or plain brown cloth; they were grateful to him, they said, for setting so good an example to the court of France. By one of those inconsistencies of the French character, they admired in the brother what they thought a crime in the sister. The economists and the philosophers were inexhaustible in their praises of that emperor who shared their views and treated them as equals,—of that sovereign of a vast empire, who travelled as a philosopher and sought instruction rather than pleasure from his journey. Joseph II. cultivated these dispositions with care; and if his sarcastic raillery against the fashions displeased certain ladies of the palace, if his sharp and public criticisms of the institutions and government seemed in bad taste to certain minds, if his sarcasms on the etiquette and customs of the court could only encourage his sister in a path which she was but too disposed to follow,—railleries and criticisms flattered the naturally fault-finding temper of the public, while his visits to the monuments, and his study of the workings of the administration and government, pleased those cultivated spirits who dictated public opinion.

The evenings of the emperor were devoted to the royal family; his days were reserved for himself and his instruction. Illustrious personages, celebrated places, public establishments,—he forgot nothing, visiting Necker and Madame Geoffrin, the Comtesse de Brionne and Madame du Barry, going to the Imprimerie Royale and to the Gobelins, to Sèvres, to Ermenonville, to the school at Alfort, to the physical laboratories at Passy, to the garden of Maréchal de Biron, and to Guimard's house. To Buffon, who was ill, he graciously said that he had come in search of that copy of his works which his brother Maximilian had forgotten. At the institution for deaf mutes he expressed his astonishment that the government had done nothing for so great a benefactor of mankind as the Abbé de l'Épée. Sometimes he betook himself to the Académie Française, where D'Alembert, under cover of a lecture on synonymy, addressed ingenious flatteries to him; some-

times he was present as a spectator at the sittings of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, or at one at the Académie des Sciences. Commerce, industry, government, finance, — he overlooked nothing in his investigations. Bertier de Sauvigny explained to him in detail the organization of the administration; Laborde, that of the royal treasury; Trudaine, the bridges and roads; Vergennes, foreign affairs; Sartines, the navy. The prince criticised several points, reproached the ministers for being too much master, each in his own department, so that when the king changed ministers, he only exchanged his bondage, and asserted that they sacrificed reality to appearance, utility to luxury, in their buildings; but on the whole he discarded many prejudices. Paris charmed him; the nation did not displease him, notwithstanding its levity; and if he had a poor opinion of those who governed, he conceived a high idea of the resources and means of the monarchy, were those resources and means only placed in competent hands.

Unfortunately he did not perceive the competent hands. The ministers in power, despite the civil things he said to them, did not inspire him with confidence, and he dreaded the reinstatement of Choiseul. "If the Duc de Choiseul had been in office, — to the satisfaction of the king and the lively displeasure of the queen, — his uneasy and turbulent head would have thrown the kingdom into great embarrassment." The archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne, alone inspired him with a high idea of his capacity, which fact does little honour to his imperial sagacity. As for the royal family, the caustic traveller judged them with excessive severity: the Comte de Provence seemed to him an "unaccountable creature;" the Comte d'Artois, a "dandy;" Mesdames, "good creatures, but nonentities." The king pleased him more; he had long conversations with him wherein the young monarch, after his first embarrassment, had talked to him in all confidence, even on the most delicate subjects, and had given proof of solid understanding. Nevertheless, in his private letters, he expressed himself in extremely harsh terms in speaking of his brother-in-law. "This man," he wrote to Leopold, "is somewhat weak, but by no means imbecile; he has ideas, he has judgment; but there is a physical as well as mental apathy. He talks rationally enough, but has no desire to inform himself, no curiosity; in fact, the *fiat lux* has not yet gone forth over that matter without form." This judgment was more

than harsh; it was unjust. If the qualities of the king were paralyzed by his timidity, they were none the less genuine; and if his accomplishments were not so brilliant as those of Joseph II., they were as extensive and probably more solid.

The emperor had not pleased all the members of the royal family equally. While Madame Adélaïde had dragged him into a closet on pretext of looking at some pictures, and then kissed him, telling him that such a mark of friendship might well be permitted to an old aunt, the Comte de Provence was but little attracted toward the queen's brother.

"The emperor," he wrote to Gustavus III. "is mightily cajoling, a great maker of protestations and vows of friendship; but on closer examination his protestations and his frank air hide the desire to pump one, as we say, and to dissemble his own sentiments, . . . but maladroitly, for with a little incense, of which he is very greedy, far from his finding you out, you easily find him out. His accomplishments are very superficial."

In reality it was perhaps Monsieur who best judged him; he had divined the man beneath the mask. Joseph II. himself, in a private letter wherein he spoke unreservedly, naïvely disclosed his methods: —

"You are better than I," he wrote to his brother Leopold; "but I am more of an impostor, and in this country one must be. As for me, I dissemble from judgment and from modesty; I even exaggerate to excess my rôle of appearing simple, natural, thoughtful. But that is what has excited an enthusiasm which is truly embarrassing."

It would be difficult to avow more frankly that one had made sport of the public; but the public, which judges only by appearances, was caught by these subterfuges. It manifested not only sympathy, but, as Joseph II. said, enthusiasm for him. Save among the friends of Choiseul, who could not pardon the traveller for having addressed only an insignificant remark to the former minister when he passed in the procession of the chevaliers of the St. Esprit, and for having passed through Touraine without stopping at Chanteloup, while he had gone to see the Du Barry at Lucienne, the impression was everywhere the same. Every one ran after the emperor; all his actions were indications of wisdom; all his words were indications of genius. "One repeated the commonplaces he uttered with an emphasis to make one die with laughing," a contemporary wrote; "all heads at Paris were turned." From Paris the infatuation spread to

the whole of France, and cast the Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois, who at that time were travelling through the middle and eastern part of the kingdom, into the shade. They literally went mad about the heir of the Hapsburgs. Who then thought of reproaching Marie Antoinette for being an Austrian?

It was necessary, however, to depart; the emperor was beginning to have enough of his rôle; and although Paris pleased him greatly, and he was proud of his success, he ended by growing tired of the perpetual ovations. Only one thing held him, the thing of which he had perhaps thought least on coming to France, — the charm he found in the companionship of the queen. That humbug, who affected simplicity and such fine indifference, had been caught by the charm of intercourse with Marie Antoinette. That inflexible censor had been disarmed by the bewitching grace of that young sister whom he chid so harshly and railed at so piteously, but of whom his opinion became modified each day; with the tenderness of heart which he knew she possessed, he discovered in her more wisdom and intelligence than he had expected. At the last moment he hesitated to go; and in proportion as the hour of departure approached, his repugnance increased.

The queen on her side could not contemplate without regret the departure of that brother whom she loved despite his scoldings, and whose counsels she appreciated despite their gruffness; it seemed to her like a final rupture of family ties. It was on May 31, in the evening, after a long day passed together in serious conversation, that they said farewell. Joseph II. was moved; Marie Antoinette made a violent effort to hide her grief, but she was choking. On embracing the king, the emperor said to him in a broken voice that he urgently commended to him a sister whom he loved tenderly; that he would never be tranquil unless he knew that she was happy. At midnight he left the château to return to his hôtel. On the following morning, at six o'clock, he set out from Versailles for St.-Germain-en-Laye, where he rejoined his suite. The queen was prostrated. She had wished to control herself before her brother; but when he was gone, she could no longer control herself, and had a violent attack of hysterics. On the following day, she went to hide her grief at Trianon with her two friends, Madame de Polignac and Madame de Lamballe. On her return, she was present at the benediction, and walked alone with the Comtesse Jules as far as Rocquencourt;



she had need of regaining possession of herself and of distracting her thoughts.

In the mean while Joseph II. continued his way across the provinces, which he visited in their turn, but he was not less touched than Marie Antoinette; and he wrote to his mother with an effusiveness which revealed his state of mind: —

"I quitted Versailles with grief, having become veritably attached to my sister; I found there a certain sweetness of life which I had renounced, but for which I see I have not lost the taste. She is amiable and charming; I passed hours and hours with her, without perceiving how they flew. Her emotion on my departure was great, her self-control admirable; it required all my force to find legs wherewith to go away."

Maria Theresa had indeed foreseen it; the emperor had fallen under the queen's charm. With the wish on parting to prolong in some way the serious intercourse which they had had together during the six weeks of his sojourn, and their unreserved intimacy, he had made out, on the request of his sister, and despite the observations of Mercy, who would have preferred a more simple form, some advice, or rather a long instruction, which he left to her in writing, under the title, "Reflections given to the Queen of France."

This instruction, a veritable catechism of her conscience, presented to the young princess her duties under two heads, — first, as wife, second, as queen. The emperor avoided with care all direct reproach; he laid down principles and asked questions. It was for his sister to reply to them and to see whether she fulfilled as was fitting the duties of her station. But under this indirect form, it is easy to perceive the personalities. It was not a catechism for the use of all women, nor even for all queens; it was for the exclusive use of Marie Antoinette, and Joseph II. showed himself therein, beyond doubt, a clear-sighted judge, but severe to excess, not to say unjust. A few quotations from some of the most important passages will suffice to give an idea of it.

"What hold have you," the emperor asked, "over the heart of the king, and, above all, over his esteem? Examine yourself: Do you use every effort to please him? Do you study his desires, his character, in order to conform thereto? Do you seek to make him enjoy your company and the pleasures which you procure for him, and which without you he would find void, in preference to everything and all other kinds of amusement? Does he see your affection occupied solely with him, with

making him shine without the least thought of yourself? Do you curb your desire to shine at his expense, to be affable when he is not?

"Are you clinging, tender, when you are with him? Do you seek occasions, do you respond to the sentiments which he allows you to perceive? Do you make him your confidant? Do you never abuse or repel the confidences which he makes to you? Do you act in a similar manner and tell him everything, or at least enough for him to hear of what concerns you and interests him, first from you rather than from another person? Do you give up things when you see that he desires it? Do you ever misuse your power? . . . All your power should be hidden; one should suspect it, acting and influencing everything, but one should see it in nothing. The king alone, your husband, should by his position act, and you should never appear in anything.

"Do you sufficiently study his character? Do you try to know what he does when he is alone? Do you know the people and things he prefers? Do you try not to bother him, and, above all, never to allow your presence to inconvenience him? Try to procure for the king those companions who please him; they should be yours; and if he has any prejudice against any one, even of your friends, you should sacrifice them. Finally, your only object . . . should be the friendship, the confidence, of the king.

"As queen you have a glorious occupation; you should fulfil the duties of your station. Decency, the formation of the court, and, above all, appearances, should receive great consideration. The respect which your private life and decorum may command is important; they form the two grounds for the public judgment. . . . Have not your manners been somewhat too light? Have you not adopted at the court some of the fashions that were in vogue when you came here, or those of several ladies, who, although amiable and respectable, should not serve as models for you, for you cannot find a model outside of your station? The more serious the king is, the more should the court seem to model itself upon him. Have you weighed the consequences of your visits to the salons of those ladies where promiscuous company is assembled, and whose character is not respected? Have you thought of the effect which your intimacy and friendship, if they are not bestowed upon persons altogether irreproachable and trustworthy, may have upon the public? The choice of friends is exceedingly difficult, and, above all, in your position, you should seek to bind to you men who are as accomplished as they are trustworthy, and totally free from ambition and desire. . . .

"Have you weighed the frightful consequences of gambling, the company which it brings together, the tone which prevails, and finally the confusion which it is sure to cause in the fortune and habits of a whole nation? . . .

"Also deign to think a moment of the inconvenience which you have

already experienced at the balls at the opera. . . . I must avow that this is the point on which I have found those who love you, and think honestly, the most shocked. The king deserted for a whole night at Versailles, and you mingling in promiscuous society, and lost in the rabble of Paris!

"But while disillusioning you from many so-called amusements, may I dare, my dear sister, to substitute another, which is worth them all? This is reading.

"Look upon this occupation as the most important, and choose books which will make you think, and improve your mind. . . . Reading will take the place of all, and those two hours of calm will give you time to reflect and to discover by your penetration all that you have to do or not to do during the remainder of the twenty-two. . . . Reading and rational companionship make up the happiness of life.

"Refrain, my sister, from speaking ill of your neighbour, which one finds so amusing. . . . By ill-natured remarks about one's neighbour one estranges honest men. . . . Avoid, I beseech you, such discourse, and, above all, the curiosity of wishing to know everything. . . .

"I implore you, be chary of your recommendations; this is a very delicate point. You may be guilty of the most crying injustice without thinking of it, and for one, often, whom it is of no importance for you to oblige, you may disgust honest men. . . . Save your influence for great occasions; and on the little ones courageously resist the solicitations which are made you, and, finally, do not take any one's part with warmth. . . .

"Politeness and affability, my dear sister, have their limits, and are only of value in proportion as they are distributed and used wisely. You must use discretion therein, and think of your situation and of your nation, which is too inclined to be familiar, and to eat out of your hand."

One must admit it ill became that prince who had just posed as the apostle of simplicity to complain of the familiarity of the French nation, to reproach the queen for her contempt of etiquette and her solitary walks with an intimate companion without the equipage of her rank, as it also seems strange to see that philosophical emperor recommending his sister to show herself pious and devoted to the Church, and adding that the greatest infidel should do so out of policy. It was more in his rôle and nearer the truth when he pointed out the drawbacks of her constant intercourse with young people, and her too ready reception of foreigners, especially of Englishmen, whose customs and manners were then in fashion, to the great displeasure of the king.

"This must shock the nation," he said, "and produce a bad effect abroad. . . . One will attribute your affability to a coquetry which is desirous of pleasing every one, and runs after the applause of the crowd,

while lacking the approbation of sensible people, to whose opinion the crowd always returns in the end."

He finally finished in these terms: —

"Cultivate harmony and friendship in all the family, but avoid too great familiarity, and, above all, the seduction of hot-headed persons who wish to have you share their life in order to cover up their follies with your authority. Such follies are horse-races, frequent visits to Paris, the balls at the opera, the hunts in the Bois de Boulogne, all those gay parties in which the king does not join, and which certainly and with reason give him no sort of pleasure.

"Remember that you are his wife, that you are queen, and do not forget the tender brother and friend who has said all this to you, who is separated from you by three hundred leagues, and almost without hope of seeing you again, but who loves you, and will love you all his life, more than himself.

"Here are the observations which I have made. You were born to be happy, virtuous, and perfect; but it is time, and more than time, to reflect, and to adopt a mode of life which you can continue. You are growing older; you have no longer the excuse of youth. What will you become if you wait longer? An unhappy woman, a more unhappy princess; and as for him who loves you more than anything in the world, you will break his heart. I could never accustom myself to knowing you were not happy."

Never, perhaps, was a more severe accusation under a more affectionate form addressed to the court of France and to Marie Antoinette at that period of her life which we have called the period of dissipation. No more complete arsenal ever furnished the enemies of the queen with arms against her. We must not, however, take all these reproaches of Joseph II., disguised under the apparent form of advice, literally. All the inconveniences which he pointed out did not exist, and by no means to the extent which the acerbity of his criticism would seem to indicate. At the moment of leaving France, being desirous of arresting his sister in the unfortunate course he saw her pursuing, he thought it necessary, in order to move her more profoundly, to draw a frightful picture of the abuses which had shocked him; and with this intention, which accorded with his nature, inclined to exaggeration, he so far forced the colour of the picture as to talk of her advancing age, which left her no excuse, — her age of twenty-two! He wrote *ab irato* under the influence of the impressions which he had just received. This page must have been written after a conversation with Mercy, another on his return from a card-party at the house of the Princesse de Guéménée, or after



Maria Theresa and Joseph II.

bitterness disappeared, and the best resolutions were made. The queen determined to stop little by little frequenting the salon of the Princesse de Guéménée, to abstain from high play, to spend a few hours of the day at home in order to be more constantly with the king than in the past; and, in fact, during the first weeks she made a genuine effort to reform, — no more visits to Paris, no more gambling, an evident and delicate attention toward the king, whom she accompanied to the hunt and on his journeys to St. Hubert; the Princesse de Guéménée was deserted to such an extent that she resented it; there was greater dignity in the appearance of the court, and marks of deference to old persons and persons of rank. Still better, the queen seemed to have acquired a taste for reading. She studied English history, and afterward had serious conversations with the Abbé de Vermond of more than two hours' length. During the journey to Choisy the affability of the young sovereign was remarked, — more attention to the choice of persons admitted to pay their court, more reserve in bestowing marks of favour, more care to be impartial; and the rule of conduct which the emperor had left was re-read from time to time.

But these good resolutions were soon broken; the temptations revived; Marie Antoinette first resisted, then fell. The Comte d'Artois, on his return from his journey in the east, regained favour, and his influence was again exerted over the queen, who submitted to it, although with regret. He organized the court amusements, and was by no means always prudent. During the summer of 1777 the heat was oppressive. To escape from it, the court used to repair to the terrace at Versailles in the evening, where the band of the French and Swiss Guards played at ten o'clock. The royal family mingled with the crowd which these concerts attracted to the château; the queen and the princesses walked there without suite, sometimes together, sometimes with one of their ladies on their arm. The king had gone once or twice; these solitary promenades had pleased him, and it had been his example that had authorized them. It was none the less true that they were open to objection. "In a nation where youth was so hot-headed and indiscreet," as Mercy justly observed, "one could not be too much on guard against occasions that might be misconstrued." Marie Antoinette found this out to her cost. These promenades on the terrace at Versailles, innocent though they were, served as pre-

texts for the most odious imputations against the honour of the queen; they made possible and perhaps inspired the scene enacted later in the affair of the necklace.

There were more serious causes for concern. Hardly six months after the emperor's departure, things were going little better than before his arrival. In vain he wrote to his sister to remind her of her promises; his letters remained without response, or she replied to them only by evasions. The journey to Fontainebleau, which was always a critical period, did not present fewer dangers in 1777 than in previous years: recommendations to the ministers, influence of the favourites, an affluence of young Englishmen, horse-races, late hours, — everything had fallen again into its old course. Gambling especially had attained to frightful proportions; the chief talk in Paris was of the large sums lost at faro by certain of the courtiers, by the Duc de Chartres, by the sovereign herself. Not that there were not from time to time a return to prudence and intervals of reaction in her dissipation; but these times were only so many points of departure whence the current that bore along the young princess took a fresh start and hurried on even more impetuously, it would seem, for having been retarded a moment. The counsellors of the queen were distressed; Mercy exhausted himself in vain remonstrances; the Abbé de Vermond made an excuse for not going to Fontainebleau; and Maria Theresa, heart-broken, wrote to her ambassador, "Perhaps nothing but a positive misfortune will ever make her change her course; but is it not to be feared that the change may come too late?"

And yet for that very journey to Fontainebleau, Marie Antoinette had made the wisest resolutions with the best faith in the world. At bottom she did not care for gambling; she was disgusted with horse-racing; she was tired of all those amusements; she had no personal fondness for the Comte d'Artois, who was the promoter of them; and it was not without real chagrin that she allowed herself to be led on by those about her. But she was young; she was lively; she carried in her heart a grief which had consumed her for seven years. For a moment she had believed herself to be pregnant; of her own accord she had immediately reminded Mercy of all her plans of reform, of all the wise and firm resolutions she had determined to adopt under such circumstances. Disappointed in her hopes, she had thrown herself anew into the vortex of amusements, in order to escape her dis-

appointment, and, above all, to escape from herself. Vexed with her husband, whose apathy and coldness constantly disappointed her desires, she had come to regard him as a character without spring and as a person of no consequence, for whom it was useless to put one's self out, since she could rule him by his timidity, — an error of the imagination rather than of the heart; the thoughtless anger of a young woman, irritated and nervous, driven to extremities by successive deceptions; a morbid state of mind which we do not undertake to justify, but which may be explained perhaps by the repressed irritation induced by her unhappy situation when compared with the fecundity of the Comtesse d'Artois, who was then pregnant for the third time. Such was Mercy's opinion, when after enumerating the drawbacks of a sojourn at Fontainebleau, he wrote to Maria Theresa, —

"It is always to the event of her pregnancy that I turn in the hope of a change for the better, and it will be then that the queen will of herself adopt those ideas which up to the present have not been urged upon her with the success one could desire."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WAR OF SUCCESSION IN BAVARIA. — DEATH OF THE ELECTOR. — JOSEPH II. OCCUPIES LOWER BAVARIA; HIS MOTHER'S DISAPPROVAL OF IT. — ARMAMENTS OF FREDERICK II. — FEELING IN FRANCE. — MARIA THERESA IMPLORES HER DAUGHTER'S INTERVENTION. — FUTILE NEGOTIATIONS. — DECLARATION OF WAR. — MARIE ANTOINETTE DEMANDS THE MEDIATION OF FRANCE; SUDDEN CESSATION OF HER APPEALS. — INTERVIEW WITH MAUREPAS. — STATEMENT OF THE COMTE DE LA MARCK AND OF THE COUNT VON GOLTZ. — THE TRUE EXTENT OF THE QUEEN'S INTERVENTION IN THE AFFAIR OF BAVARIA. — THE PEACE OF TESCHEN.

IT was not solely for the pleasure of seeing his august sister, nor of visiting the cities and public establishments, that Joseph II. had made that sojourn in France which, as Louis XVI. wrote to Vergennes, was to make the king of Prussia so furiously jealous. There was a secret and more political aim: the emperor wished to see for himself what were the dispositions and resources of his ally, and to strengthen the union of the cabinets of Vienna and Versailles in case of future eventualities. If he had allowed himself to say, as the wicked tongue of Frederick II. asserted, which, however, it is difficult to believe, that the king of France was an "imbecile or a child," he none the less felt that that imbeçile and child was at the head of one of the first powers of Europe, and that it was essential for him to gain his confidence. Consequently he had neglected nothing to arrive at this end; and he would seem to have almost succeeded. Louis XVI. had opened his heart with all cordiality and frankness to his imperial brother-in-law, — sometimes on the subject of the queen, whose charming qualities he was pleased to praise, sometimes on matters of government, which he treated with clearness and unexpected precision. "If I had desired it," the illustrious traveller said on leaving one of these conferences, "the king would have shown me his papers, and all I could have wished to know of his affairs." But there was one subject on

which the French monarch had remained obstinately silent; and this was precisely concerning the affairs of Germany, — there was the difficulty.

Austria had always meditated an aggrandizement on the side of Bavaria; and the death, which was then imminent, of the Elector Maximilian Joseph seemed to open the door for the realization of this dream. Maximilian had no direct heir; his future successor, the elector-palatine, Charles Theodore, was far away, and without power. Joseph II. counted on profiting by the situation to take possession of certain districts, to which he claimed to have rights whose origin dated back to the fifteenth century. In the course of 1777 negotiations had been opened with Charles Theodore to obtain this concession amicably; and the palatine, content to assure his tranquil possession of the rest of the States of Bavaria by means of a partial sacrifice, was upon the point of consenting, when, on Dec. 30, 1777, Maximilian died. His death precipitated matters. The emperor hastened to sign, on Jan. 3, 1778, his treaty with Charles Theodore; and on the 15th, twelve thousand Austrian troops took possession of the district which had been ceded in Lower Bavaria. "The death of the elector gives us much to do," Joseph II. sent word to Mercy on January 5. "It is one of those occasions which only occur once in an age, and which we must not neglect." And he wrote a few days later to his brother Leopold, "It is a true *coup d'état*, and an addition to the monarchy of inestimable value."

It was Joseph II. alone who wished to enter upon this affair, in which he was, according to his own expression, the "prime mover." The Prince von Kaunitz only lent himself to it with repugnance; and Maria Theresa, strong in her experience and wisdom, disapproved entirely of her son's ambition. She could not understand how one could expose one's self to a war in order to uphold uncertain and superannuated pretensions. An amicable negotiation might pass; but an armed occupation was entirely contrary to her disposition.

"The present situation," she wrote to the emperor on January 2, "far from offering a happy, open, and peaceful prospect, overwhelms me with a crowd of reflections which I cannot rid myself of, and which, if I did not tell you, would make me reproach myself all my life. It concerns the happiness and tranquillity, not only of the people committed to my care, but also of all Germany. . . . If our pretensions to Bavaria were better founded and more solid than they are, I should still hesitate to enkindle a universal

fire for our private advantage. Judge how many ill-founded and superannuated rights, as the minister has said, and as you know as well as I, must be taken into consideration in order not to occasion disputes which may bring so many misfortunes in their train. . . . I speak only from my experience in politics, and as a mother. I should not oppose arranging this affair by means of compromise, negotiation, and agreement, but never by means of arms or force, — a method which would set all the world against us, and justly, from the first step, and would lose to us even those who would have remained neutral. I have never seen any such enterprise prosper, with the exception of that against me in 1741, when Silesia was lost. . . . I see, therefore, no drawback in deferring the marching of the troops, but a great many disadvantages in precipitating it."

This was the language of reason; but Joseph II. was too impetuous to listen to it. It seemed to him that his desires could encounter no obstacles; that the circumstances being favourable and all Europe engaged, this *coup* must succeed without war; and that the acquisition, although still incomplete, would be but the more excellent for having cost nothing.

A strange illusion which events were not long in dispelling! At the first news of the invasion of Lower Bavaria, Frederick II. massed an army on the frontiers of Bohemia, ready to invade it if the emperor insisted upon his scheme of aggrandizement. The elector of Saxony, who also had pretensions, on the side of his mother, to the succession of Maximilian, joined his troops to those of the king of Prussia; the Duc des Deux-Ponts, another heir of the elector, protested on his side against the arrangements made; and the Bavarians themselves, loyal to their antipathy against Austria, refused to accept a change of domination. "The last Bavarian peasant has an aversion for Austria and good-will toward France," the Marquis de Bombelles, minister from France to the Diet of Ratisbon, wrote to the Baron de Breteuil, ambassador to Vienna. Under the inspiration of Prussia, Germany was aroused. In France the feeling was not less profound. The old prejudices against the imperial avariciousness still existed, carefully cultivated by Frederick II. and his ambassador, the Count von Goltz; and Joseph II. was not ignorant of it, since on Jan. 5, 1778, he wrote to Mercy on announcing his project to him, "This will not greatly please the nation with whom you are." The feeling was warm, and the most ardent began to talk of renovating their equipage of war. The queen herself, on the first news of the death of the elector, wrote to Madame de

Polignac that she feared greatly lest her brother "might be up to some of his tricks." The king did not hide his displeasure. "The ambition of your relatives is going to upset everything," he said to his wife: "they began with Poland; now Bavaria is the second volume. I am sorry for it on your account." And the French ministers received orders to announce to the courts to which they were accredited that the dismemberment of Bavaria was made against the will of the cabinet of Versailles, which disapproved of it highly.

This was only the logical corollary, authorized by the circumstances, of the instructions given on April 10, 1775, by Monsieur de Vergennes, to the Marquis de Bombelles, on his departure for Ratisbon as French minister.

"The king," he had said to him, "loyal to the principles which have ruled their Imperial Majesties, will neglect nothing to strengthen and render more inviolable the ties which assure the peace of Germany; but in fulfilling these engagements, he does not believe himself to be released from those which had previously been formed with the Germanic body in the treaty of Westphalia.

"His Majesty had not ceased to recommend to his minister to the Diet, as well as to his other ministers residing at the courts of the princes of the empire, to declare that his alliance with the House of Austria was founded upon the treaty of Westphalia and upon the Germanic constitutions; that his Majesty regarded it as one of his first maxims to allow no attack to be made thereon; that far from wishing to serve as an instrument to any schemes of oppression which the imperial court might form, his Majesty regarded the alliance rather as a means of serving the cause of the States to better purpose."

At this critical juncture the former energy of Maria Theresa reappeared unimpaired. She regretted that her son had raised the question; but the affair once engaged, she exerted herself, with all the vivacity of her maternal love and of her patriotism, to prevent any evil consequences. It was to France that she first turned. She had used every effort to strengthen the alliance, and it seemed to her only just that the young princess who was the heart of it should serve to consolidate it, or at least to prevent its being broken. If in the beginning she had some scruples in thus involving her daughter in politics; if she feared that by her indiscreet interference she might make herself importunate, and even suspected by the king, — her scruples were soon dissipated, and she brought to bear on Marie Antoinette all the ardour of a sovereign who trem-

bles for her people, of a mother who trembles for her sons, all the cleverness of a woman of genius, who, as an old politician and cognizant of the heart of her daughter to its most secret fold, knew to a marvel what chord to touch, what sentiments invoke, to make of that daughter a devoted ally and a docile instrument. There were no more severities or reprimands, such as her correspondence usually contained; there were the most tender caresses, touching prayers, pathetic appeals; her letters were true masterpieces of feminine and maternal diplomacy. She brought everything into play, — the vanity of Marie Antoinette, her affection for her mother, her natural antipathy to the king of Prussia, everything, even to her hopes of pregnancy, which then for the first time were making her heart tremble.

The affair was as yet only in the beginning; but a conflict threatened; Mercy was ill; the queen alone could checkmate the manœuvres of Frederick, who feared her alone, and prevent a rupture between France and Austria, which would be a mortal blow to the empress. Marie Antoinette, who hitherto had always refused to interfere in affairs, interested herself warmly in this, and did so solely from affection for her mother. It was her heart, — as she said herself, — it was her heart alone that prompted her to act. She was disturbed, uneasy; she turned pale on reading this phrase, " Any change in our alliance would kill me."

Maria Theresa knew this, and profited by the affection of her daughter. See the picture she draws, — the empress writing at five o'clock in the morning; the courier waiting at her door; there is not a moment to lose to checkmate the black machinations of Prussia. She counts alone upon the justice of the king, and on his tenderness for his dear little wife. Never was it more important to keep intact the interests of the two houses and the two States; the existence of the emperor and of his brothers, and the health of the empress, depend upon it. It was necessary, above all, to prevent a war, the mere idea of which made her succumb. What else might one not fear? Maria Theresa loves her son-in-law too well to wish to involve him in an enterprise opposed to his interests or to his glory.

Marie Antoinette spoke to her husband, but with a certain indifference; she only yielded to what was demanded of her — it is the Prussian minister who informs us — after she had been tormented to excess. And even then her actions were neither

sufficiently precise nor sustained, nor prompt enough, to satisfy Mercy. Where was that firm will which one had a right to expect from her? What eternal remorse if she should neglect any means that could add to the satisfaction or repose of her august mother! Why content herself with what the king said to the Count von Goltz, that he did not wish to have anything to do with the affairs of his master? It was not sufficient that he should have nothing to do with the affairs of Prussia; it was necessary to have something to do with those of Austria, as befitted a good and faithful ally.

Nor was this all. Joseph II. entered the scene in his turn; he sent letter upon letter to his sister. "Since you do not wish to prevent the war," he wrote to her in a tragic tone, "we shall fight as brave men; and under all circumstances, my dear sister, you will have no cause to blush for your brother, who will ever merit your esteem."

The queen was touched to tears on reading these lines; her lively imagination pictured her brother in danger, her mother in tears. Agitated and trembling, she sought the king; she sent for the ministers; she spoke to them forcibly; she demanded a definite declaration, which alone could prevent a conflict. But toward what end were her energies in fact directed? Toward gaining for the Lower Countries a guarantee which both the king and his ministers had already resolved upon.

On his side, Frederick II. did not remain inactive; in the month of August, 1777, he made overtures to the Marquis de Joucourt, envoy extraordinary from France. He had his friends at the court of Versailles; he had his spies; he had his minister, the Count von Goltz, who watched the queen, who sought to surprise the most private secrets of the royal couple, even the mysteries of the alcove, — Goltz, who was all eyes and all ears, who spread and cleverly used the remarks, more or less authentic, attributed to Joseph II. concerning the nonentity of Louis XVI. "This is the moment to display all your strength," Frederick wrote to him on Feb. 11, 1778; "it is necessary that the deaf should hear, the blind should see, the apathetic should act." Goltz redoubled his efforts; he wrung from Vergennes a despatch which Maurepas himself declared to be "hard and bad," wherein France declined all application of the *casus fœderis* to Austria. The queen heard of it, and was indignant; she pressed the ministers, and obtained from them, with the con-



sent of the king, a new despatch, more amicable in form, but scarcely different in matter, and which did not stipulate for that guarantee of the Lower Countries which we have spoken of above.

No progress was made, however. On the instance of his mother, Joseph II. had written, in vain, in his own hand to the king of Prussia; this correspondence only served to redouble the distrust and bitterness of the two adversaries, and the situation continued to be strained. European diplomacy was active; Russia saw a means of insinuating herself into the affairs of Germany, and of turning toward St. Petersburg the eyes hitherto turned toward Versailles. This power, which had been late in entering the European concert, visibly leaned toward Prussia. Maria Theresa was alarmed; she feared lest France, whom she found cold, should be seduced in its turn by Frederick. She said: —

"He uses every cajolery and advance possible, — every one knows this, — so long as he wishes to arrive at his object; but once there, he acts in exactly the contrary manner, and never keeps his word. France has had some experience of this, as have all the people of Europe, with the exception of Russia, whom he fears. Let no one rely upon the latter; she follows the same methods as the king, and the heir is even more Prussian than his so-called father, or his mother, who has somewhat recovered from her mania, but not enough to expect anything from her against the king of Prussia, even protestations, — very lavish of smooth words, which mean nothing, after the manner of the Greeks, *græca fides*.

"These are the two powers which you wish to substitute for us good, honest Germans. We have the same interests of family and State. . . . It would be exceedingly unfortunate if the peace of Europe depended upon two powers so notorious in their maxims and principles, even in the government of their own subjects; and our holy religion would receive the last blow, and manners and good faith would have to hide themselves among the barbarians."

After this picture, "which was not exaggerated," the empress adroitly insinuates that in the end the court of Versailles would gain from the alliance as much as the court of Vienna, and that Austria, if pushed to extremities and abandoned by her friends, might turn to her adversaries, and join the party "in order to have her share of the cake." At the same time, and what was more menacing, England had sent to her ministers in Germany the order to conciliate Austria as much as possible. This was a

serious danger at the very moment when the war in America had just broken out. What would happen if Joseph II., irritated and naturally little sympathetic toward France, urged by the remarks which were daily circulated in his army against the French, yielded to these suggestions; if an alliance were established between Vienna and London; and if they had to add the preoccupations of a continental war to those of a maritime war, which were then absorbing the entire attention of the cabinet of Versailles? Marie Antoinette, in seeking to maintain the Franco-Austrian alliance on the moderate conditions which we have just pointed out, would be furthering the interests both of the country of her adoption and those of her native land. And in fact what was the end at that moment for which French diplomacy was striving? Here it is, as stated in a despatch from Vergennes to Bombelles on June 29, 1778: "The king continues to use every effort to the end that the spirit of justice and moderation may prevail, and that the tranquillity of Germany may be maintained."

These efforts failed; war was declared. On July 5 Frederick II. entered Nachod in Bohemia, and on the 7th, the first shots were fired. Maria Theresa was wild with anxiety; she knew that the Prussian army was stronger by forty thousand men than the Austrian army, and that in face of a warrior like Frederick, the military talents of Joseph II. would count for but little.

"This is stronger than I am," she wrote to her son Ferdinand. "I am broken-hearted. I tremble at every door that slams, at every carriage that passes quickly, at every woman who walks in haste. I preach to myself; I try to find myself such as I was thirty-six years ago; but I was young then, I had a husband, who took the place of everything to me. Weakened by my years and my reverses, my health no longer sustains me; my soul alone through religion resigns itself and acts, but does not revive me."

Mercy was immediately advised of the great news. "I dare not dwell upon it too much to the queen," the empress wrote to him, "for fear of exciting and moving her." But the ambassador had not the same scruples; he sent the despairing note of her mother to Marie Antoinette. The queen, greatly distressed, burst into tears; she countermanded an entertainment which she was to give at Trianon, and intervention from a high quarter was necessary in order to keep her from renouncing the distractions which the state of her health and the beginning of her pregnancy rendered necessary. The king in alarm came to her, himself

bathed in tears, and assured her that he wished to do everything in his power to lessen her grief. Thus encouraged by her husband, the young woman sent for Maurepas. She spoke to him firmly; and when the old minister tried to find refuge in his usual evasions, "This is the fourth or fifth time, Monsieur, that I have spoken to you of this affair," Marie Antoinette replied imperiously. "You have never made any other response; until now I have been patient, but matters grow too serious, and I will no longer support such defeats." And recapitulating from the beginning the affair of Bavaria, she proved that the condescension of France had alone encouraged Prussia. Maurepas, surprised at a vigour and decision which he was not accustomed to meet, lost himself in excuses and in protestations of devotion.

Maria Theresa, however, made a new effort. Resolute to bear everything, even to the degradation of her name, in order, as she said, "to dissipate the dangers which threaten the empire and Europe," and without informing her son, but taking upon her old gray head all the charge and all the blame, she sent Thugut to Frederick, on July 13, to treat for a peace; she offered to renounce all pretension to Bavaria, if Prussia on its side would give up the succession to the margravates of Bayreuth and of Anspach. But even these efforts, which cost her so much, were futile; Joseph II. disavowed them angrily, and Frederick repelled them disdainfully. At the end of a month the negotiations were broken off; war continued and was unfavourable to Austria; Marshal Loudon was forced to retreat before Prince Henry. Maria Theresa turned again to France: —

"Save your house and your brothers," she wrote to Marie Antoinette. "I shall never ask the king to involve himself in this unfortunate war, but only to make some protestations, — to name and assemble some regiments and generals to come to our succour. It is not becoming to France that we should be subjected to our cruel enemy. She will never find a friend or an ally at bottom more sincerely attached than we."

On receiving this letter, Marie Antoinette, whom the absence of all news during fifteen days had plunged into the most painful uneasiness, sought the king at the moment when he was having a conference with Maurepas and Vergennes, and demanded of him — what? An armed intervention? No; simply the mediation of France to re-establish peace, and to put a stop to this effusion of blood. The request, one must acknowledge, was

modest; the ministers made no objection to it. The idea of a mediation which did not compromise France was compatible with the policy which they had followed since the beginning of the affair, and their good-will had grown stronger since they had learned positively of the rupture of the negotiations. Vergennes did not hide the displeasure which the refusal of the king of Prussia had given to the cabinet of Versailles.

But Maria Theresa was impatient; she was in haste to see the ruinous war terminated; she took up her pen to trace the most gloomy and touching picture of the situation, — times were bad; snow already covered the mountains; the armies were suffering; Maximilian was ill; one might fear everything, so long as these unhappy circumstances continued: —

"Try, my dear daughter, to put an end to them as soon as possible; you will save a mother who has reached the limit of her strength, and two brothers who must in the end succumb, your country, a whole nation who love you. The honour and even the interest of the king are involved in this alliance. . . . We only beg of you to speak firmly everywhere. . . . But a great deal of steadfastness and equity of language is necessary, and there is no time to lose. . . . What happiness if your confinement takes place in a time of peace, which you will have procured for us, and which will be so much to the honour of the king, in drawing more closely the bonds of our alliance, the only one necessary and fitting for our holy religion, for the happiness of Europe, and our houses! Not only the good of the monarchy, but my own preservation depends upon it."

What could Marie Antoinette do, thus tormented by her mother, tormented by Mercy? What could she do in an affair where everything was brought to bear to move her, — her political preferences, her religious sentiments, everything, even to that maternal love which was aroused in her at the first movement of her child, — what could she do, she to whom Goltz himself has done the justice to acknowledge that at this juncture she only ceded to the repeated solicitations of the court of Vienna? The circumstances were favourable. The hostile armies, which had remained opposite each other, but almost inactive, during the whole summer, had been forced by the bad weather, which was approaching, to suspend hostilities; two Prussian corps had already been obliged to retire. This was the time, if ever, to intervene to bring about the peace which the empress desired so ardently, which the king also wished for, and to which the emperor himself was not opposed. Once more Marie Antoinette spoke to her

husband of the affair which preoccupied represented to him the necessity of hasteni peace, and of an honourable peace; for Aı other. It was the only means of avoidin; which, in the end, France, *nolens volens*, gaged. She insisted upon this also to M ness distressed her; she spoke to him cle: with a certain moderation, in order, as she king into a quandary between his minister desired the pacification of Germany; but she was convinced that it would conduce to and to the welfare of France, not less than own dear country."

But suddenly the intervention of the quee her appeals less pressing. She spoke on but ran over cursorily the points in dispute, no more. Maria Theresa complained of b most interesting moment for her daughter of her pregnancy. Russia supported Prus ing for Austria. Mercy insisted on his si his royal pupil that she should keep herself in her own eyes, and in the eyes of her fam or neglected the least thing that could re The ambassador became urgent, almost counsel which he gave her than a repriman to her.

What, then, had happened? Had the qı sible of her brother's embarrassment and Assuredly not; but the time of her confinen and that event, so long desired, which the c as the point of departure for an increase cisely the one that marked the decline of t Antoinette felt the imperious duty imposed dignity that made her truly queen of Franc of maternity bringing with it a thrill of pat toward the king and his ministers an attitud but of reserve.

The Comte de la Marck relates that the manded from France the assistance of eig had been stipulated in the treaty of 1756, urge Louis XVI. to grant this reinforcemen

"Before speaking to the king, the queen sent for the Comte de Maurepas and explained to him the interest she took in her brother's request, and her desire that he should dispose the king favourably toward it.

"At this time the queen was pregnant for the first time after many years of waiting. Monsieur de Maurepas adroitly seized upon this circumstance, and after laying before the queen the reasons why France should not take part in a war which was opposed to her interests, and even perhaps to justice, added 'that the interests of France should, if possible, be dearer than ever to the queen, under the happy circumstances that promised to give an heir to the throne.'

"The queen replied to Monsieur de Maurepas that he did justice to her sentiments for France, and that after the conversation she had just had with him, she would not interfere in the affair nor even speak of it to the king. She kept her word."

There is some inexactness of detail in this account of De la Marck; the incident must have taken place somewhat later than he places it; nor can we discover that the queen ever demanded an armed intervention. But the fact itself is true, though it has been called in question, and we find it confirmed, and in almost the same language, in the official correspondence of a man who was no friend to Marie Antoinette, but who was almost as well informed as to her acts and movements as Mercy himself; for if Mercy was enlightened by his devotion, the former was by his distrust and hate,—we speak of the Prussian minister to Paris, the Count von Goltz. On sending his master an account of a conversation he had had with the prime minister of France, the Count von Goltz wrote:—

"He, Maurepas, wished to do this justice to the princess, the queen, that she listened to reason; that he had found this to be the case particularly in the affair of Bavaria; that then he, the minister, had said to her that the child she was bearing did not cease to cry to her that she was queen of France before everything; that he had added that, being on the verge of the grave, he would not be able to serve her offspring in the time to come, and that, therefore, he would render it the most essential service in pleading its cause before the queen-mother; that this princess, much moved, had thanked him for thus reminding her of her true duty, and that, in fact, during the whole course of the affair, the queen had not again appeared."

After this testimony, coming from a person whom we cannot suspect of partiality, it seems to us impossible to doubt the fact.

Despite the vivacity of her first appeals, toward what end was

Marie Antoinette's interposition in this affair in reality directed? Toward the maintenance of the Franco-Austrian alliance and a mediation to secure an honourable peace. On the first point there was undoubtedly a great divergence of opinion among certain old diplomats, who were faithful to old and obsolete traditions, and among certain young innovators who were fanatical partisans of Frederick II.; but on the whole, the king and even his ministers thought as the queen did, and in face of the prodigious and already menacing development of Prussia, it was the only policy to follow. It could not be good for France to favour the indefinite growth of that new power, — her protégé of yesterday, her rival of to-morrow; and a diplomat who indeed belonged to the old school and nourished deep-rooted prejudices against Marie Antoinette, the Marquis de Bombelles, wrote to the Baron de Breteuil, "We cannot, as formerly, return systematically to our alliance with the king of Prussia. This prince and his successors will be too powerful to exhibit that spirit of deference which it is fitting for us to find." After a century have we not too good cause to appreciate the correctness of these previsions of the Marquis de Bombelles?

Who to-day can reproach Choiseul for having founded the alliance of France and Austria, or Marie Antoinette for having wished to maintain it?

As for our mediation, Bombelles saw therein a means of reestablishing our influence in Germany, and of showing the king of Prussia what a word from us could do toward maintaining the balance in Europe. The emperor alone did not desire it; but it was necessary "to recall that prince to moderation, who had departed from it against the wishes of his august mother and of all the sensible persons of his empire." And, in fact, Joseph II. showed himself displeased with the attitude of France, and particularly of his sister, at this juncture. "The political conduct of the king on this occasion," he said to the Comte de la Marck, "is very far removed from that which I should have expected from a court which was allied to us and pretended to be friendly."

The negotiations were long. If Maria Theresa desired peace ardently and with a sort of feverish impatience, Joseph II., whose pride would be humiliated by a peace, sought it reluctantly; and Prussia, feeling herself the stronger, being secretly aided by Russia and openly by Saxony and Hanover, adjourned any agreement. Finally, after many disagreeable negotiations, a con-

gress assembled at Teschen; and on May 13, 1779, without any intervention on the part of the queen, — for Mercy did not even acquaint her with the fact, — the peace was signed, to the lively disgust of the emperor, who was forced thereby to renounce almost the whole of his claim to Bavaria; to the great relief, however, of the empress, who expressed her deep gratitude to the king and queen, and growing more just after the cessation of her anxiety, acknowledged that France had done all that could have been expected of her to bring about this peace.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FIRST PREGNANCY OF THE QUEEN; HER HAPPINESS; HER PLANS FOR THE EDUCATION OF HER CHILD. — THE KING'S JOY. — VARIOUS SENTIMENTS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY AND OF THE COURT. — MALICIOUS REMARKS. — DRAMATIC CONFINEMENT OF THE QUEEN. — THE BIRTH OF MADAME ROYALE. — JOY OF THE PUBLIC MINGLED WITH DISAPPOINTMENT. — THE QUEEN'S WORDS TO HER DAUGHTER. — TE DEUM IN NOTRE DAME. — AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE CONDUCT OF THE QUEEN, DESPITE CERTAIN INEVITABLE RELAPSES. — INTIMACY OF HUSBAND AND WIFE. — MARIE ANTOINETTE'S AFFECTION FOR MADAME ELISABETH. — IMPATIENCE OF MARIA THERESA AND THE FRENCH PEOPLE TO HAVE A DAUPHIN. — MISCARRIAGE OF THE QUEEN. — DEATH OF MARIA THERESA. — GRIEF OF MARIE ANTOINETTE. — SECOND VISIT OF JOSEPH II. TO FRANCE. — BIRTH OF THE DAUPHIN. — UNIVERSAL REJOICING.

"IN the last months of 1777," Madame Campan relates, "the queen being alone in her room, had us called, my father-in-law and me, and presenting her hand to us to kiss, said that as she looked upon us as persons concerned for her happiness, she wished to receive our compliments; that at last she was queen of France, and soon hoped to have children; that she had been able until then to hide her grief, but that in secret she had shed many tears."

These hopes, however, were again deferred; but at the end of some months they were once more renewed, and this time it was not to Madame Campan, but to her mother, that the queen confided them.

"Madame, my dear mother," she wrote to her on April 19, 1778, "my first impulse — and I am sorry now that I did not follow it eight days ago — was to write of my hopes to my dear mamma. I was deterred by my fear of occasioning too great grief, if my great hopes came to nothing; they are not yet absolutely sure, and I cannot be entirely certain before the first of next month. . . . In the mean while I think I have good reasons to be confident; furthermore, I am marvellously well; my appetite and my sleep have improved."

It is easy to understand how the first thrill of joy at these hopes made the queen's heart beat. She had so often envied the fecundity of the Comtesse d'Artois. She realized so well that so long as she was not a mother she would always in a way be considered a foreigner. What precautions were taken in order that this dream might not vanish! She gave up her rides, her excursions to Paris, even billiards; she only went for a walk, and afterward remained seated in her boudoir, busy with some needle-work. When the spring came, she installed herself at Marly, where the walks were more beautiful and more convenient, where she went out immediately on rising, and where the fresh air of the morning and moderate exercise brightened her spirits and fortified her body. If now and then she drove, it was only with the express permission of the *accoucheur* whom she had chosen, — Vermond, a brother of the abbé. No more late hours, no more gambling. Her life became more serious, her will more firm, her mind more thoughtful. Her thoughts were entirely absorbed by the child she was bearing. She followed, step by step, the various evolutions of a condition whose novelty delighted her, and whose every advance she hailed with delight; she was sufficiently interested to measure her waist, in order to confirm its enlargement.

She occupied herself in thinking of the care with which she should surround the little being who was at that moment the object of her tenderness; she plunged with delight into all the sweet and smiling details of maternity. The child should not be swaddled; it should be brought up in liberty, in a carriage, or in the arms; it should be lodged on the ground floor, which was only separated by a little *grille* from the terrace of the château, on which it could take its first steps more easily than on the parquet. If it were a dauphin, — and it must be, for all the world foretold it, — no governor should be appointed before the age of five; this would be a means of avoiding intrigue, and of making a more mature choice.

In order publicly to announce her happiness, and to inaugurate it by an act of charity, she sent twelve thousand livres to Paris and four thousand to Versailles, for the deliverance of poor people detained in prison for debts to nurses. A cry of popular gratitude should reply to the joyful cry of the parents, and those children who regained their fathers should bless that mother who was at last to embrace her child.

The king was enchanted; he was all expansiveness and pride in his new dignity; he surrounded her who promised him this great happiness, which had so long been desired in vain, with delicate attentions, and an affection which was at last enthusiastic; he announced the news officially to the empress. Everything went well, and despite the alarm which the war of Bavaria caused the queen, the danger of her brothers, and the anguish of her mother, she bore the fatigues of her pregnancy marvellously well. "My health is always excellent," she wrote on August 14. "My child made its first movement on Wednesday, July 31, at half-past ten in the evening; since then it often moves, which gives me much joy. I cannot tell my dear mamma how each movement adds to my happiness." On the following day she sought her husband. "I come, Sire," she said to him gayly, "to complain of one of your subjects, who has had the audacity to kick me." The king laughed his big, hearty laugh, and tenderly embraced his wife.

But all the world did not laugh. If Mesdames, the aunts, seemed openly to share the happiness of their nephew, and to draw near again for an instant to their niece, which reconciliation, however, did not last; if the Comte d'Artois, solely occupied with his pleasures, seemed quite undisturbed by the new situation, — the two Piedmontese sisters, Madame and the Comtesse d'Artois, while preserving outwardly the most decorous attitude, none the less made in private painful and disagreeable reflections; Monsieur preserved his ordinary manner, but he wrote to Gustavus III.: —

> "You have heard of the change in my fortune. . . . Externally I regained mastery over myself very quickly, and preserved the same manner as before, exhibiting no joy, — which would have passed for hypocrisy, and would have been; for you can readily believe that I have not experienced any, — nor disappointment, which might have been attributed to feebleness of soul. My private thoughts were more difficult to conquer; they still rebel now and then."

And the ministers, — particularly Maurepas, — who saw in the pregnancy of the queen, in her more serious life, in the tender affection which the king showed her, the assurance of an influence which threatened them, and which they had sought to stifle in dissipation, were equally discomfited, together with the courtiers, who had not been invited to Marly, whither the queen went in search of rest and solitude; and all

those envious of Madame de Polignac, whose favour was greater than ever, to the degree that Louis XVI. had sent for her hastily to come to the court to console her royal friend, when disturbed by the despairing and urgent letters of Maria Theresa; and the vindictive Comtesse de Marsan, still sore against Marie Antoinette, whom she could not pardon for her lack of sympathy for the Rohans, and her liking for Choiseul, — Madame de Marsan, who was too well seconded in her machinations against the queen by the confidential man of her nephew, the Abbé Georgel, an intriguing and dangerous subaltern, whose conversation made the good monarch so indignant that he wished to drive him from Versailles.

All these malcontents joined together to undermine the queen's power at the very moment that it seemed to be growing more secure, and to ruin her, if not with the king, who was then in the first freshness of his new enthusiasm, at least with the public, who had grown more distrustful under the existing circumstances, owing to the tempestuous ambition of Joseph II., which had reawakened all the old prejudices against the House of Austria.

Odious couplets, infamous remarks, invented by spite and propagated by envy, circulated in Versailles and Paris; and only a few days before the confinement of Marie Antoinette, a whole volume of songs against her and some of the principal ladies of the court was thrown into a window. Louis XVI., indignant, wished to discover the author; he was discovered; he was not even disturbed.

The nearer her confinement approached, the greater became the anxiety; prayers were offered in all the churches; at the court a thousand intrigues were started, which had for their object the approaching birth of the royal child. Every one was on the alert. More than a hundred persons of quality, who usually lived in Paris, installed themselves at Versailles, in order the sooner to know the issue of the great event, and to be ready to profit by it. The city overflowed with people; no more lodgings were to be had, and the price of living was trebled.

On December, the 18th, the queen went to bed at eleven o'clock, without feeling any pain. At half-past one some one rang hastily; labour had begun. Madame de Lamballe and the Honouraries, who had been warned, entered the chamber. At three o'clock, Madame de Chimay went to the king; half an

hour later the princes and princesses who were at Versailles were ushered in, while pages galloped to warn those who were at Paris or St. Cloud. The royal family, the princes and princesses of the blood, the Honouraries, and Madame de Polignac were in the chamber of the queen, about the bed, which stood opposite the mantel. The household of the king, that of the queen, those who had entrance to court, were in the smaller rooms adjoining; the remainder of the assistants in the card-room and the gallery. A bizarre custom required that the confinement of the queens of France should be public; it was observed, even to its abuse. At the moment when Vermond cried, "The queen is about to be delivered!" such a wave of people surged into the royal bedchamber that in an instant the apartment was full; it was impossible to move; one would have thought it was a public place on the day of a festival; two Savoyards even mounted upon a piece of furniture in order to see more easily.

At half-past eleven the child came into the world. It was a girl. It was immediately carried into the dressing-room to be swaddled, and handed over to the governess, the Princesse de Guéménée. The king, joyous and moved, followed the bearer to rejoice in the sight of his first-born; and almost the entire crowd hastened after the king and the child.

Suddenly an anxious and urgent cry resounded, "Air! hot water!" Blood-letting was necessary. The warmth, the noise, the lack of air, the constraint which the queen had imposed upon herself to hide her suffering, the shock she had received at first when the child did not cry, the joy which agitated her when the child began to cry, — so many contrary emotions had brought on a threatening relapse. The blood flew to her head violently; her mouth was contorted; the queen lost consciousness. An indefinable shudder ran through the crowd; the Princesse de Lamballe fainted. Some one flew to a window and hastily opened it. The hussars drove away the curious and indiscreet persons who remained in the chamber; but the hot water did not arrive. With rare presence of mind, Vermond ordered the first physician to bleed her. The queen opened her eyes; she was saved! All this had happened so rapidly that the king did not even witness the incident. But during these few moments what anguish the spectators had endured! If the queen had been bled two minutes later, she would have been dead. Consequently what an

explosion of joy when the danger was past! They congratulated one another, embraced one another, and cried for joy. On that very day, while the Marquis de Beon, lieutenant of the guards, went to inform the *corps de ville* of Paris, which had been assembled since the morning, of the birth, and while extra couriers set out for Vienna and Madrid, the child was baptized in the chapel of the château, in the presence of the king, by the Cardinal de Rohan, grand almoner, and received the names of Marie Thérèse Charlotte. Monsieur was proxy for the king of Spain as godfather. Madame represented the empress as godmother. All the royal family were present at the ceremony. A solemn *Te Deum* was chanted in the chapel, and in the evening a magnificent display of fireworks was set off on the Place d'Armes. The court, the city of Paris, and Versailles, — all France was wild with joy. In the capital, the two chief aldermen went to the prisons and released all those who were detained for debts to nurses. A bonfire was lighted on the square of the Hôtel de Ville, and the principal houses of the city were illuminated. But a sufficiently lively disappointment mingled with these transports. The royal child had regular and charming features, large eyes, a pretty mouth, a complexion that promised perfect health; but it was only a girl, and they had counted upon a dauphin. "Poor little one," the queen had said to her daughter when she pressed it to her heart for the first time, "you are not desired; but you will be none the less dear to me. A son would have belonged more particularly to the State; you will belong to me. You shall have all my care; you shall share my happiness, and lighten my griefs."

The king gave himself up to his delight without any regrets; he was full of pride in his new dignity. He could not show sufficient affection to his wife. He even gave up his walk and the exercise which was necessary to him in order not to be away from her. In the morning he was the first at her bedside. He passed a part of the morning there, returned thither in the afternoon, and remained all the evening. As for his daughter, he was never tired of looking at her. He went every instant to gaze upon her, and one day when the child squeezed his finger he was indescribably delighted. This rough nature began to open and develop; this heart, so long cold and closed, began to warm and expand under the revivifying influence of paternity.

On the 26th, the queen received for the first time her former



lady of honour, the Maréchale de M
of the bedchamber, the Duchesse c
ladies of the palace came in their t
had entrance to the court. On the
up in her *chaise longue*. On Jan
recovery in the sacristy of the chape
her court duties in their usual forn
panied by the king, Monsieur, Ma
Comtesse d'Artois, she went to Par
for her happy deliverance. She w
her maternity, as she had done the l
by a good deed. At Versailles, six
to each of the curés of the village, t
in private charities. At Paris a hu
married by the archbishop on the d
habited and dowered at her expens
five hundred livres' dowry, two hundr
for the wedding, together with the
month for the first child, if the moth
if she confided it to a strange nurse
appeared in the cathedral, these hund
whom the lieutenant of police, Len
choose from among the best-lool
church to salute the queen as she pa
were released; considerable sums we
the different parishes. In the evenin
works, illuminations, fountains of wine
sausages, free representations at the
the coal-men occupied the box of the
that of the queen. But bread was d
heavy charges; the acclamations we
noisy than had been hoped for.

The queen, however, took care on th
profane amusement; she wished to p
the capital was only determined by pi
by a desire for those diversions whi
there in search of. After the service
at Ste. Geneviève, she went to sup at
to Versailles. She gave herself up t
and renounced in part her noisy amu
that maternity imposed new duties u

more moderate. Lent was quiet; gambling was rare; her condescension toward the favourites less ready.

The pretensions of the Comte d'Adhémar met with invincible resistance; the companions of the queen were constrained to observe more order and decorum; harmony was carefully cultivated in the royal family; Monsieur and Madame were treated with more consideration; the Comte d'Artois with more coldness. The queen had repented on the score of her petulant brother-in-law, and refused to share in his rancour against Necker.

Not that there were not still imprudences. Marie Antoinette, recovering from the scarlet fever, withdrew to Trianon, with four lords who were among her intimate friends, — the Duc de Coigny, the Duc de Guines, Comte Esterhazy, and the Baron de Besenval. The king had given his consent; and the constant presence of Madame, of the Princesse de Lamballe, and of Madame Elisabeth somewhat diminished the evil effects of this preference. None the less the court gossiped; evil tongues baptized the four privileged men, the four nurses of the queen, and amused themselves with picking out the four ladies who should in their turn be the king's nurses. There was also that adventure of the cab, which we have related above, in reducing it to its true proportions, and the resumption of her rides, which alarmed the chief physician, Lassone; and furthermore, certain noisy entertainments during the spring of 1780, and the return to games of chance, from which it was more difficult to wean the queen than from all other diversions.

But despite these inevitable relapses, her progress was evident. "If I have ever fallen into error," she wrote herself, "it was from childishness and levity; but now my head is much better balanced." Mercy, that pitiless critic, affirmed that her sojourn at Trianon in the spring of 1779 was passed quietly. The sojourn at Marly which followed was not less satisfactory, and was repeated in 1780 to the universal content of those who were admitted to the court there. The decorum was perfect; the order excellent. The other journeys did not take place; Compiègne was given up from economy, and Fontainebleau for the prompter expedition of affairs. The evening walks had ceased soon after the rides. Gambling had diminished; the queen had not dissembled her displeasure at some heavy losses at the house of Madame de Lamballe, and she herself averred that she played rather from condescension than from taste.

She suppressed the theatre at Choisy for fear of the expense, and lent herself with the best grace to the reforms which the minister of finance instituted in her household. The king having wished to double her allowance, she would not accept but the half during the war; and Maria Theresa, although always so severe on her daughter, wrote to her on June 30, 1780, that the charming queen of France contributed more than a little to the only happy moments of her painful life.

Louis XVI., who had been obliged to separate himself from his wife during the scarlet fever and her convalescence,—Louis XVI., after a momentary coldness caused by malevolent insinuations, had returned to his sentiments of devoted tenderness. In vain some miserable persons, profiting by the illness of the queen, had tried to tempt him to gallantry. His pure and loyal nature revolted against these despicable efforts, and the intimacy between husband and wife had only been strengthened by them. There seemed on both their parts to be but a rivalry of attentions and mutual affability. The queen accompanied her husband to St. Hubert; the king accompanied his wife to Trianon, and went to pass the evening with her at the house of Madame de Polignac.

The countess was always the one among the friends of Marie Antoinette whose favour was the most durable. The queen could judge severely, and generally with correctness, of the other persons of her set; concerning her she would hear nothing. She passed hours and whole days in her company. Madame de Polignac's influence, which seemed for an instant, if not shaken, at least shared by the Princess Charlotte of Lorraine, daughter of the Comtesse de Brionne, continued steadfast, braving all criticism, and defying all attacks.

Another friendship, less lively than this one, but more profound, perhaps, was begun at this time, which, after some momentary eclipses due to the perfidious insinuations of the old aunts, was to be revived in the hour of adversity,—that for the sister of Louis XVI., the amiable and pious Madame Elisabeth. On the departure of Madame Clotilde the young princess had exhibited a sensibility which had touched Marie Antoinette. "She was a charming child," she said, "who had intelligence, character, and much grace." The child had grown up; she was an agreeable young girl, full of enthusiasm and gayety. The queen had taken her with her to Trianon; she had been delighted with her, and on her return said to every one that "there was no one more

amiable than her little sister-in-law; that she did not know her very well as yet, but that she had made a friend of her, and that it would be for life." She kept her word, and after that epoch Madame Elisabeth always accompanied her in the journeys to Trianon. But the person who had the greatest attraction for the queen was her daughter. She rejoiced in the child with all the ardour and vivacity of a first attachment. She went to see her every hour of the day, supervised the care bestowed upon her, following with an attentive eye her physical development, delighted to see her grow, smiling at her first steps and words, pleased that she first stammered "papa," — for she said it would be a bond the more for the king, — still more pleased, perhaps, when the child, who was beginning to walk, ran to her holding out its arms, and never tired of talking of her daughter in her letters to the empress; and a little later, when the process of teething had brought on an attack of fever, remaining at her bedside for whole hours, and only consenting to join in the amusements of the court on the positive assurance of the physician, and the formal desire of the king; a mother in the full acceptation of the term, with a mother's tenderness, alarms, little happinesses, and previsions. The education of her daughter was the constant object of her thought. This woman who every one thought was only occupied with amusements and frivolities, had meditated upon the infinite difficulty and delicacy of the education of children of royal race.

If inexorable tradition did not allow her to change the governess, who seemed ill fitted for her high position, the queen at least promised herself to supplement the insufficiency of that governess, and from the start traced a plan which Mercy described "as very wise and well considered." She was determined before all that no idea of grandeur should prematurely spring up in the mind of the child. Without absolutely dispensing with all etiquette, she was resolved to banish all hurtful leniency, all useless affluence of serving-people, every appearance likely to give rise to sentiments of pride. Marie Antoinette was faithful to this plan, and under the eyes of her father and mother Marie Thérèse Charlotte grew up in the practice of strong and Christian virtue.

But a dauphin was necessary. "We hope that the queen may conduct herself better next year," a lady had written on the day following the birth of Madame Royale. Poets dwelt upon the subject. The Comtesse Fannie de Beauharnais, who, it seems, had

predicted to the young sovereign the birth of a son, repaired her error in these couplets: —

> "Yes; as blundering sibyl for mercy I sue.
> But if my prediction has failed to come true,
> I am fain to admit in turning the book,
> For leaflet the second the first I mistook."

And the poet Imbert, taking up the same thought, composed the following four lines, which ran over Paris: —

> "To thee, O France! a dauphin shall be born.
> As harbinger a princess doth appear:
> For when you see a Grace to earth return,
> You may be sure that Cupid too is near."

These hopes were again disappointed.

Some months after the birth of Madame, the queen became pregnant; but on raising the window of her carriage, she strained herself, and a week after had a miscarriage. She was greatly grieved at it, and wept bitterly; the king passed the whole morning by her bed, exhibiting the most touching affection, taking her in his arms, and mingling his tears with hers.

Maria Theresa was not less distressed than Marie Antoinette; she was impatient to have a grandson. As mother, she ardently desired an event which would have crowned the happiness of her daughter; as politician, she felt that the birth of a dauphin, in giving satisfaction to the country and fulfilling the wishes of the king, would definitely assure the power of the queen. She returned to the subject constantly, in her letters either to Mercy or to Marie Antoinette, even to the point of importunity. It was the subject of her reiterated recommendations. It was her first wish for a Happy New Year; it was almost a fixed idea. The empress came to lecture the queen, and in a way to hold her responsible for the adjournment of her hopes. "We must have a dauphin," she repeated incessantly, with that insistence and haste to enjoy which old people display who feel their lives passing away.

"Impatience consumes me; my age does not allow me to wait. Until now I have been discreet; but I shall become importunate in the end; it would be a murder not to give more children to that race." And a month later, tired of being disappointed in her desires, she wrote again, "No appearance of pregnancy; I am in despair; we must have a dauphin. . . . In order to insure your happiness and that of France, it must be."

It was to be; but Maria Theresa was not to see it. Her health, undermined by so many fatigues, so many maternal and political anxieties, so many cares of all kinds, failed visibly. For a long time she had suffered from catarrh; it seemed as though an internal fire consumed her. On Nov. 24, 1780, she fell quite ill. Violent attacks of coughing, and continual suffocation, forced her to leave her bed. The physician who was called did not deceive her; he urged the empress to receive the last sacraments. On the instances of the emperor, extreme unction was deferred; but on the 25th the invalid confessed; on the 26th the nuncio brought her the viaticum. Maria Theresa received it kneeling upon her *prie-Dieu*, her head covered with a mourning veil, as on Ash Wednesday. This woman, who was truly strong, did not wish that death should find her in bed. On the 28th, after extreme unction had been administered, she remained alone with the emperor, gave him her benediction for his absent brothers and sisters, wrote much, discussed various questions, gave orders for her burial, thinking of everything during those last hours, — of her children, of her subjects, of her affairs, arranging them even to the least details, giving Joseph II. advice on the administration of his vast empire, talking to Maximilian of his future, to the Archduchess Marianne of her vocation, preserving to the end the clearness of her mind and the vigour of her character. And following with a calm eye and tranquil heart the progress of death as it approached, "I have always desired to die thus," she said, "but I was afraid that it might not be granted to me. I see now that everything is possible with the grace of God." She passed a frightful night, suffering from terrible attacks of suffocation, when they expected to see her die at any moment. After one of these crises she seemed sleepy, but fought against it. Her children urged her to yield. "How can you wish me to sleep," she said, "when at any instant I may be called before my Judge? I am afraid to go to sleep; I do not wish to be surprised; I wish to see the advent of death." When she felt her last hour approach, she sent away her daughters, not wishing to have them see her die. Then suddenly she rose from her armchair, took a few steps toward her *chaise longue*, and fell; they stretched her out upon it as comfortably as possible. The emperor said to her, "You are worse." . . . "Bad enough to die," she replied. Then addressing her physician, "Light the mortuary candle," she

said, "and close my eyes; for that would be too much to ask of the emperor." Joseph II., Maximilian, the Prince Albert of Saxony, knelt around her. All was over.

Thus died on Nov. 29, 1780, at the age of sixty-three, in the full plenitude of her faculties, a great sovereign and a good Christian, — Maria Theresa of Austria, empress of Germany, and last heir of the Hapsburgs.

It is related that in the last benediction which she gave to all her children, present and absent, when she pronounced the name of Marie Antoinette her voice softened and her eyes filled with tears. Had she in that last hour a sudden intuition of the bloody future awaiting that princess who was then so envied? Or on reviewing rapidly the ten years that had passed since the day when the archduchess left Vienna, gracious and smiling at life, and contemplating, with that clear view which approaching death gives to all, the harm which successive influences — her own at times too readily accepted — had done to that young woman, did she understand the dangers which were about to assail her, did she seek to dissipate these dangers in the last letter, which, if we may believe Weber and the Count von Goltz, she dictated on the very day of her death to the queen of France? These are secrets of the grave; but it would seem, indeed, that a threatening cloud had veiled the radiant horizon of eternity from the great sovereign.

There was but one cry at the news of the death of Maria Theresa, — a cry of veneration and of praise for the great soul that had quitted the earth. At Paris, despite the prejudices against the House of Austria, there was a general expression of respect and regret. Maria Theresa loved France, and at bottom she was admired and loved there. The king, who had only a mediocre sympathy for his brother-in-law, felt profound consideration and filial reverence for his mother-in-law. In Germany the emotion was extreme; Frederick II. himself, the implacable adversary of the empress, joined in the universal homage: "I shed sincere tears on her death," he wrote to D'Alembert; "she was an honour to her sex and to the throne. I have waged war against her, but I have never been her enemy."

The terrible news reached Versailles on Wednesday evening, December 6, but Louis XVI. had not the courage himself to announce it to Marie Antoinette; he confided this sad duty to the Abbé de Vermond, and only went to his wife a quarter of an

hour after the melancholy messenger. The queen's grief was frightful; the violence of the blow even brought on a slight hemorrhage, which gave rise to much disquietude. The young woman immediately assumed mourning of respect, while waiting for the court to put on its official mourning. She withdrew to her rooms to give free vent to her tears, and remained shut up there during twelve days, only leaving them to go to mass, and only admitting the royal family, the Princesse de Lamballe, and the Duchesse de Polignac, caring to talk only of her mother, of her virtues, of her counsels, and of her example, and giving expression to her grief in the following letter, addressed on December 10, to Joseph II.: —

"Stricken with this awful misfortune, it is only in tears that I can write you. Oh, my brother! oh, my friend! no one remains to me but you, in the country which will always be dear to me. Be careful, take care of yourself; you owe it to us all. There is no one but you to whom I can commend my sisters. They have lost even more than I. They will be very unhappy! Adieu, adieu! I cannot see what I write. Remember that we are your friends, your allies; love me. I embrace you."

This dear brother returned again to France during the summer of 1781, but only to make an exceedingly short sojourn, in the strictest incognito. The queen was none the less happy to see him again. He seemed like the echo of the last words, the expression of the last wishes of a mother whom she still mourned. When he departed at the end of a few days, on August 5, well pleased with his visit, and on finding in the king and queen a considerable change for the better, she could not hide her sorrow, and the courtiers saw her hide her face under her hat to weep.

Maternity alone could console her for these repeated blows of misfortune. God was finally to send her that dauphin so ardently and so long desired. From the month of April, the pregnancy of the queen had been announced. Her health continued excellent during the entire summer, and this time she counted with certainty upon a son. "My health is perfect; I am growing very large," she wrote to her friend, Princess Louise of Hesse-Darmstadt. "Your sorcery is very kind to promise me a boy. I have great faith in it, and I do not doubt of its coming true."

It was on October 22 that this happiness was granted her. The preceding night had been comfortably passed. On the 22d,



on wakening, the queen felt some pain; she none the less took a bath; but the king, who was to go to shoot at Sacle, countermanded the hunt. Between twelve and half-past, her pain increased; at a quarter past one the dauphin was born. In order to prevent a repetition of the accident which had occurred at the birth of Madame, it had been decided that the crowd should not be allowed to invade the royal apartment, and that the mother should not know the sex of the child until all danger was past. On learning the news at half-past eleven, Madame de Polignac had run to the queen; but the other persons who ran there with equal haste — the ladies of the palace in the greatest undress, the men as they were — had found the door closed. Only Monsieur, the Comte d'Artois, Mesdames the aunts, Mesdames de Lamballe, de Chimay, de Mailly, d'Ossun, de Tavannes, and de Guéménée, were there, passing alternately from the bedchamber to the Salon de la Paix. When the child was born, it was silently carried to the large dressing-room, where the king saw it washed and dressed, and gave it to the governess, the Princesse de Guéménée.

The queen was in bed, anxious and knowing nothing; all those who surrounded her controlled their countenances so well that the poor woman, seeing their constrained air, thought that she had given birth to a second girl. "You see how reasonable I am," she said gently; "I do not question you." But the king could no longer restrain himself. Approaching the bedside of his wife, "Monsieur le Dauphin," he said, with tears in his eyes, — "Monsieur le Dauphin requests permission to enter." The child was brought; the queen embraced it with an enthusiasm that cannot be described, then handing it to Madame de Guéménée, "Take him," she said, — "he belongs to the State; but I shall have my daughter."

The scene was indescribable: all constraint was thrown aside; joy broke forth freely; it was so lively and so genuine that it even silenced jealousy and hate. An eye-witness wrote: —

"The antechamber of the queen was charming to see. The joy was overwhelming; all heads were turned. You saw them laughing and crying alternately. People who did not know one another, men and women, fell upon one another's necks; and even those who were least attached to the queen were carried away by the universal delight. It was the same when, half an hour after the birth, the doors of the queen's chamber were thrown open, and Monsieur le Dauphin was

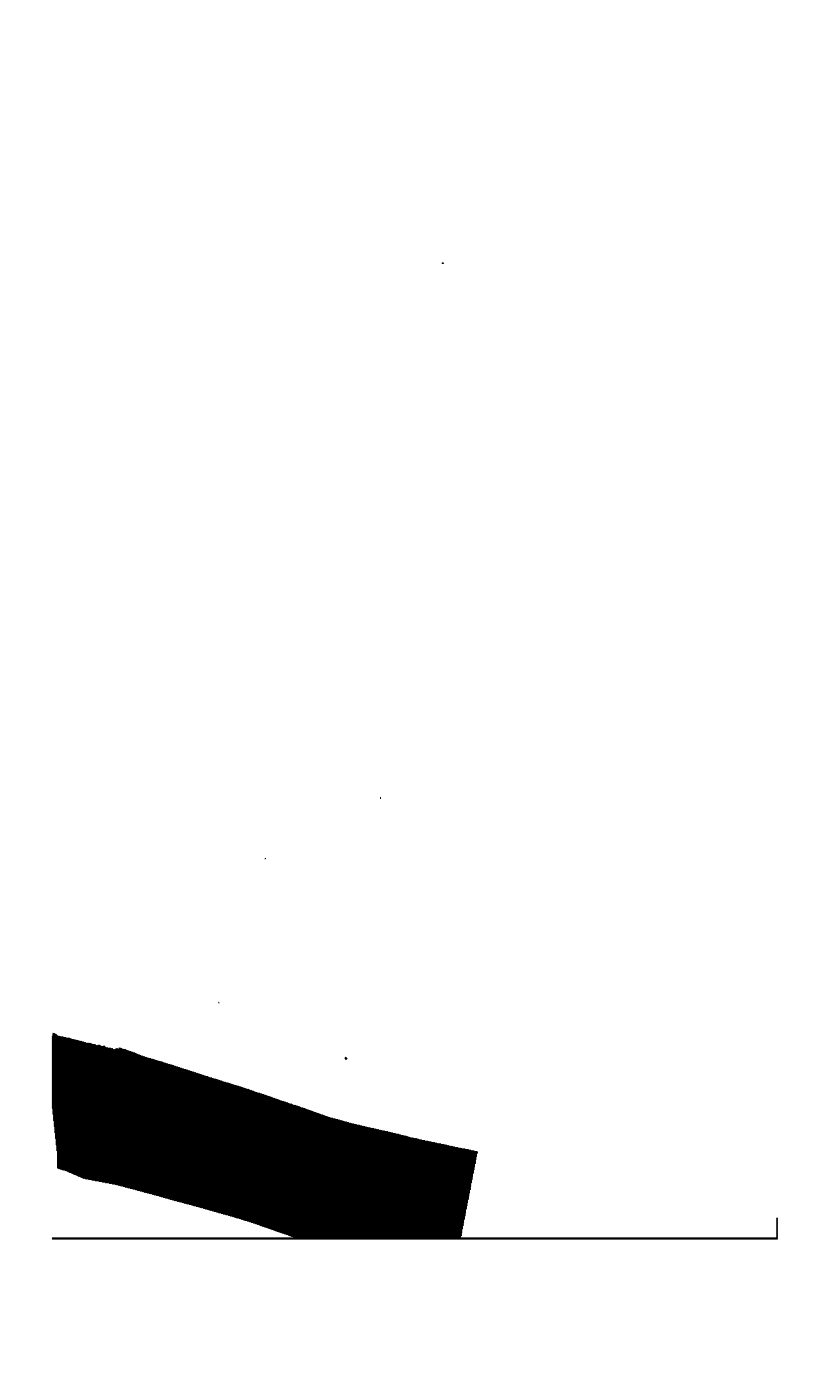
announced. Madame de Guéménée, radiant with joy, held him in her arms and traversed the apartments in her chair, to carry him to her own apartment. There were acclamations of joy and clapping of hands, which penetrated to the queen's chamber and assuredly to her heart. The crowd adored and followed him. Arrived at his apartment, the archbishop wished to decorate him with the *cordon bleu;* but the king said that he must be made a Christian first."

Madame heard the news, which was to remove her forever from the throne, in an amusing fashion. She was hastening to the queen, when she encountered one of those valiant Swiss then attached to the fortunes of France, the Count of Stedingk, who could not contain his joy: "A dauphin, Madame," he blurted out; "a dauphin, what happiness!" The princess answered nothing; but she had sufficient tact to hide her feelings and to manifest, outwardly at least, great satisfaction, being more clever than Madame de Balbi, "who showed the temper of a dog."

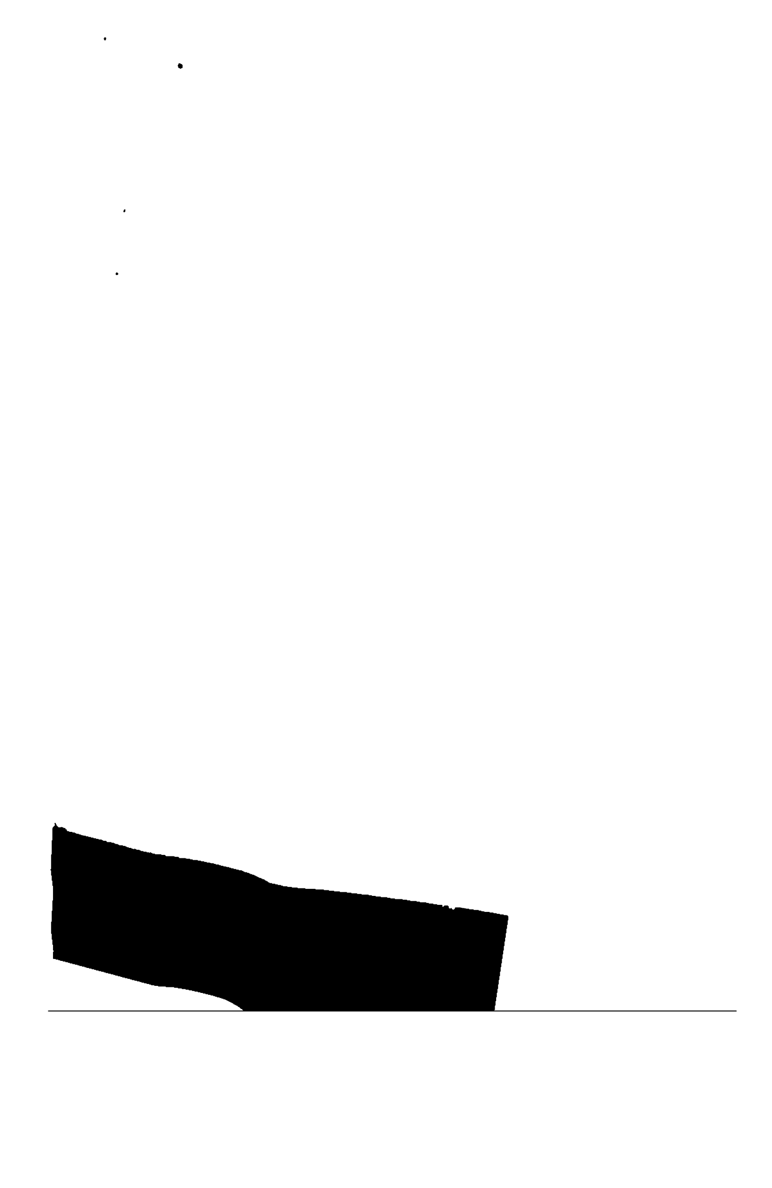
Monsieur, like his wife, dissembled his sentiments. Madame Elisabeth was so delighted that she could not believe it; she laughed, cried, and was almost ill from emotion. The Comte d'Artois, alone of the royal family, let fall a word which betrayed his disappointment. His son, the young Duc d'Angoulême, had gone to see the dauphin. "*Mon Dieu!* papa," he said on leaving the chamber, "how little my cousin is!" "A day will come, my son," the prince could not help replying, "when you will find him big enough."

As for the king, he was intoxicated with his happiness; he did not cease to look at his son and to smile at him; tears ran from his eyes; he presented, without distinction, his hand to every one; his joy overcame his habitual reserve. Gay and affable, he sought every occasion to pronounce the words, "My son, the dauphin;" and taking the child in his arms, he held it up at the window, with an expression of content which touched every one.

At three o'clock the new-born child was baptized in the chapel of Versailles by the Cardinal de Rohan, grand almoner. He was held at the font by Monsieur in the name of the emperor, by Madame Elisabeth in the name of the princess of Piedmont, and named Louis Joseph Xavier François. After the ceremony, the Comte de Vergennes, chief treasurer of the St. Esprit, brought him the *cordon bleu;* the Marquis de Ségur, minister of war, the cross of St. Louis. A *Te Deum* succeeded the







Madame Elizabeth.

> His work throve mightily and met with no mischance.
> Enchanted with the sudden change, the tree
> Did the honours to the rose right gallantly.
> Ere long the owner found, from its exuberance,
> He had an Austrian rose — and laurel-tree of France."

The celebrations were as splendid as ingenious. The arts and crafts of Paris spent considerable sums to go in a body to Versailles to offer their homage to the queen, and to defile before her, with music at their head, in the marble court. The procession was charming; it continued during nine days. Each corporation bore the insignia of its profession: the chimney-sweeps carried a chimney, from the top of which one of their smallest members sang, in a clear voice, a song appropriate to the occasion; the butchers led a fat cow; the chair porters carried a gilt chair, which contained a nurse with a dauphin; the locksmiths hammered upon an anvil; the shoemakers made a little pair of shoes for the new-born child; the tailors a little uniform for his regiment. The entire court enjoyed this spectacle; the king remained for a long time watching it, and had twelve thousand livres distributed among these good people.

The locksmiths of Versailles did not wish to be behind their colleagues of Paris, — they presented a secret lock. Louis XVI., in his quality of artisan, wished to discover the secret himself. When he pressed a spring, a little steel dauphin, admirably cut, sprang from the middle of the lock. The prince was delighted; he said aloud that the gift of these good people had given him great pleasure, and he had thirty livres more distributed among them than among the other corporations.

The women of the *halles* came in their turn on November 4, to congratulate the happy mother; there were one hundred and twenty of them, dressed in gowns of black silk, and the most of them covered with diamonds. Three of these women were admitted near the bed of the invalid; one of them, who was extremely pretty and had a beautiful voice, delivered an address which had been composed by La Harpe, and which he had written on her fan. "Madame," she said to the mother, "it is so long that we have loved you without daring to tell you so, that we shall have need of all of your indulgence in order not to abuse your permission to express it to you now." And then, turning to the dauphin, "You cannot yet understand the vows which we make about your cradle; they will explain them to you some

day. They are all expressed in the wish to see in you the image of those who have given you life."

The queen responded with the greatest affability to this discourse, and the delighted king had a sumptuous repast served to these women. One heard him humming, with a joyous air, lines sung by the women of the *halles*, whose lively rhythm and popular air had struck him: —

" Be not fearful, father dear,
To see your growing family;
God will feed them, never fear,
Make Versailles swarm with progeny.
Should hosts of Bourbons France befall,
There would be bread and laurel wreaths for all."

On Wednesday, the 26th, the king went in great state to Paris, to hear a *Te Deum* sung in Notre Dame; the archbishop came to congratulate him at the door, and in the evening the illuminations were superb.

On the following day, the 27th, the opera, which had been recently rebuilt, inaugurated its reopening by a free representation, to the cries of "Long live the king!" "Long live the queen!" "Long live the dauphin!" During a whole month, there was some new celebration each day, religious ceremonies of thanksgiving, or amusing spectacles, — a procession of the parishes of Paris to Notre Dame, wherein one noticed the curé of St. Nicolas, followed by five hundred poor men; free representations at the theatres; couplets, concerts, etc. Each one wished to distinguish himself by his zeal, even to the flower-woman of the king, Madame Médard, who had a *Te Deum* sung at St. Germain l'Auxerrois. Charity had its usual place in these solemnities. Four hundred and seventy-four thousand livres were appropriated to the deliverance of prisoners for debt.

The great official celebrations, postponed for a time, owing to events of the war, then to a grave illness of the Comtesse d'Artois, were definitely fixed for Monday, Jan. 21, 1782. On that day the queen left La Muette at half-past nine, forsook her state coach at the Rond du Cours, and went on foot to Notre Dame, then to Ste. Geneviève, to thank God for the happy birth of the dauphin. At a quarter past one, she betook herself to the Hôtel de Ville, where the king joined her, and where the princes, the nobles, and ladies of the court in full dress awaited her. The architect, Moreau, had covered the court of the hotel, and had thus made of it a magnificent gallery; the arcades

formed boxes, decorated with Corinthian columns, and surmounted by shields bearing the arms of France. The royal box occupied the space between the three columns in the centre, with its rotunda and cupola decorated with gold vases filled with lilies. The top of the box was covered with crimson stuff and crowned by a dolphin. When, before dinner, the king and queen showed themselves upon the balcony, the whole crowd that filled the square and the quay applauded.

A sumptuous feast of seventy covers had been prepared. The king was served by the provost of merchants, Monsieur de Caumartin; the queen by the niece of the provost, Madame de la Porte. After dinner a drawing-room was held, and play in the great hall, whence one returned to the banqueting-hall to see the display of fire-works on the new quay. It represented a Temple of Hymen, on the threshold of which France received the infant who had just been born. The plan was good; the execution but mediocre; the service at the banquet itself left much to be desired. If we may believe a chronicler, the dukes and peers had nothing to eat but butter and radishes.

At a quarter past seven the king set out for La Muette; half an hour later the queen departed in her turn. Both of them traversed the principal streets and squares, which were brilliantly illuminated, and in particular the Place Vendôme and the Place Louis XV. Enthusiastic acclamations greeted them along their route, but were always more noisy for the king than for the queen. It would seem that some bitterness was always destined to be mingled with the purest and most legitimate joys of that princess; Louis XVI. was in a bad humour on that day, we do not know why, and had refused with unwonted severity the requests which she had made to him. He had not consented to receive the flags taken at St. Eustache, on his entrance into Notre Dame, before they were hung in the basilica. And in the evening, despite the appeals of his wife, he had insisted upon returning alone to La Muette, in order not to confound the two *cortéges* in the same demonstration. And what was more serious, a despicable pamphlet, which was odiously injurious to the queen, had been affixed that very morning to the door of the cathedral, and a great rumour spread that a danger threatened her at the Hôtel de Ville. In consequence of this the unfortunate sovereign, who had been imprudently warned of these rumours and threats by the Comte d'Artois, passed the whole day in a state of terror which poisoned her happiness.

On the 23d the king and queen returned to Paris to attend a ball at the Hôtel de Ville, and appeared very gay, despite the mob which filled the hall to the point of half suffocating them.

In the country the enthusiasm was unalloyed; it was a patriotic delirium, a chronicler has said. The States of Bourgogne dowered twelve young girls; the archbishop of Vienna did the same; the Parliament of Rennes distributed six thousand livres among the poor; at Soissons, the intendant, Le Pelletier, gave a feast to the labourers of his district, and distributed wine to three thousand persons. At Limoges they raised a fountain and created a Place Dauphine; at Orléans they baptized a street with the same name. At Rouen a travelling actor, who was still obscure, but who was destined to a great and sinister celebrity, Collot d'Herbois, played on the stage of that city a piece of his own composition, and sang the following lines, which, though but a mediocre poetical attempt, were at least an ardent profession of monarchical faith, and of homage and devotion to that august princess whose kindness and virtues had conquered all hearts.

"That the French might be happy,
Our good Louis Seize
Has wedded for aye
The child of Thérèse.
From this happy union
Has sprung a brave scion.
Oh, may gracious Heaven
Watch over and screen
From misfortune unbidden,
The days of our queen!"

History pauses with melancholy pleasure over these details, which fill all the gazettes and chronicles of the time. It was the last glimmer of an order of things on the point of disappearing. The eye contemplates with delight that intimate union of a people and a dynasty, who mingled their joys, their sorrows, their hopes, and who in truth only formed a large family whose father was the king.

"The folly of the people continues ever the same," a lady of the court wrote a week after the birth of the dauphin. "One encounters in the street only violins, songs, and dances; I find all this touching, and I do not know, in fact, a nation more amiable than ours."

CHAPTER XVIII.

War in America. — Franklin's Mission. — War declared. — The Queen Favourable to the Americans. — Protectress of Lafayette. — Her Anxieties during the War. — She is Desirous of an Honourable Peace. — The Peace of 1783; its Consequences. — Princely Visitors. — The Princesses of Hesse-Darmstadt. — The Comte and the Comtesse du Nord. — Entertainments at Trianon and Chantilly. — The King of Sweden. — Prince Henry of Prussia. — Birth of the Duc de Normandie. — Bankruptcy of the Prince de Guéménée. — The Duchesse de Polignac made Governess to the Children of France.

At this time both dynasty and people were gaining new vigour from those revivifying waves of military glory, always so dear to our national pride. For three years they had been at war with England, and the French standard had regained incontestable renown upon the seas. On the 4th of July, 1776, the Congress of Philadelphia had proclaimed the independence of the United States, and decided to send three delegates over the sea to win the sympathy and support of the European powers for America. On December 2, Dr. Franklin disembarked at Auray, from the vessel which had successfully carried him through the English cruisers, and journeying by short stages, arrived on December 21 at Versailles.

The choice of an American ambassador was fortunate. An apparently good-humoured man, hiding under an appearance of simplicity, then in fashion, great cunning; affecting an air of plain dealing and independence which charmed by its contrast with the solemn formulas of etiquette; possessing the patience and phlegm of the Anglo-Saxon race; knowing how to wait without impatience, but also without ever becoming discouraged or losing sight of the end he had in view, — Franklin, both by his virtues and his defects, pleased the nation, which was easily content with words, beguiled by appearances, fond of strangers, and enthusiastic over



any innovation. He soon saw that the true sovereign of France at that time was neither the king nor the queen nor the ministers, but public opinion, and it was this opinion which he determined to influence. Everything he did was done for the sake of appearance. Free from all constraining prejudices, he went to mass, although a Protestant, praised kings, although a Republican, courted both his curé and Voltaire, — offering the holy bread to the former, soliciting the benediction of the latter for his grandson, in a scene which Bachaumont has described, and whose charlatanism revolted even that sceptic chronicler. Flattering bishops and freemasons, salons and lodges, men of letters and men of affairs, philosophers and pretty women, who embraced him despite his glasses; ignoring the received customs in order to make himself conspicuous, appearing at the theatre in a plain brown cloth coat and with uncurled hair in the midst of powdered wigs and embroidered coats; apparently tranquil and inactive, but employing many subordinate people, setting everything in action (arts, sciences, letters) to make himself known and famous, — the "good-natured Franklin," as some called him, "the good and venerable doctor," as others called him, soon became the idol, or as he himself said, "the doll," of the Parisians, while at the same time rendering his country and his cause popular. The talk was of nothing but America; every one dreamed of the United States; hair was dressed *aux insurgents;* one played Boston; every one grew enthusiastic over republican ideas, and their representative.

The young nobles declared for the cause of the rebellious colonies. The Marquis de Lafayette embarked for America despite the opposition of his family, even despite the express prohibition of the king. The Vicomte de Noailles, brother-in-law of Lafayette, the Comte de Ségur, Comte de Pontgibault, the Comte de Gouvion, even the cousins of the Prince de Montbarrey, minister of war, departed to enroll themselves under the flag of Washington. It was a veritable delirium.

Joseph II., during his journey to France, sought in vain to throw a little cold water over this enthusiasm. "My profession is to be a Royalist," he replied dryly to a lady who was praising the Americans, — "those athletes of liberty," as Frederick II. called them. But he was impotent to arrest the popular infatuation, which even gained the court. There the insurgents found an ardent advocate in the minister from Prussia, the Count von Goltz, whose master was not sorry to embroil France and England, in order to

have a free hand on the side of Dantzick, or, if need were, on the side of Bavaria. On the command of his sovereign Goltz ceased not to insinuate that France might find therein a favourable occasion to avenge her defeats, and perhaps to recover her lost colonies. And in fact the temptation was great. To take brilliant revenge for the defeats of the Seven Years' War, and the humiliating treaty of 1763; to humble in our turn our eternal rival; to inflict a decisive and perhaps irremediable blow on her power; to prove that we had not degenerated from the conquerors of Fontenoy; and, above all, to show the strength of our marine, which had been decimated in the struggle with England, but for whose restoration they had been energetically working since the accession of Louis XVI., — what a fine and alluring prospect! There was, without doubt, a financial question which might interfere. Turgot, while minister, had actively opposed all intervention in American affairs; he had written a long memoir to show that it was necessary to avoid a war as the greatest of misfortunes, since it would render impossible for a very long time, and perhaps forever, the reforms which were absolutely requisite to the prosperity of the State and the relief of the people. Necker, who had succeeded Turgot, was not more favourable to so costly an enterprise. But what was money compared to glory? Vergennes visibly leaned toward an alliance with the United States; Maurepas did not dissemble his joy at the blows dealt to British pride. Louis XVI. still hesitated; profoundly penetrated with the monarchical idea and the necessity of the principle of authority, he recoiled from supporting an insurrection; a man of peace, he was not anxious to throw himself into a war; loyal to his word once given, he felt scruples at breaking, without cause, a treaty which had been solemnly accepted, and which England had not violated. The queen had no such hesitation. She shared the general enthusiasm. Her ardent nature only saw the chivalrous side of the enterprise, — an oppressed people to defend, glory to be won, the prestige of France to be restored. She liked not the ambiguous conduct of the minister who, while refusing to break with the English, furnished in secret, and allowed to be furnished, arms and munitions to the insurgents. She put all her power and all her influence at the service of the partisans of the war, and it was she who undertook to conquer the opposition of her husband. She handed to the king a memoir by the Comte d'Estaing and the Comte de Maillebois, which energetically advocated the war, and attacked

the conduct of the cabinet as pusillanimous. "The powers of Europe," this memoir said, "will judge the reign of Louis XVI. according to the manner in which this prince will know how to use the present circumstances to humble the pride and pretensions of a rival power."

The capitulation of the English general, Burgoyne, at Saratoga, on Oct. 13, 1777, was an argument the more. This great event increased the strength of the colonies, and made the chances of their success almost certain. "The chances are a hundred to one in favour of France," Frederick II. wrote.

The joy over this victory for the Americans was great at Paris. The king himself could not conceal his satisfaction, and on December 6, two days after the news of the captivity of Burgoyne, Monsieur Vergennes informed Franklin and his colleagues that the circumstances seemed favourable for the establishment of a close alliance between the Crown and the United Provinces of North America. Negotiations were actively pushed forward; and on Jan. 21, 1778, at a ball given by the queen, the Comte de Provence, who had just left the council, announced that a treaty had been concluded with the United States, and that the order had been given to put a certain number of vessels into commission. "There was general emotion in the hall," the ambassador from England, Lord Stromont, relates, "and much whispering among the young men, all of whom were eager for war; many marks of pleasure. The Comte d'Artois exhibited transports of joy."

On February 6 the treaty was finally signed; and on March 16 Lord Stromont demanded his passports. They had entered upon the struggle. With her taste for war and her thoughtlessness for the future, France threw herself into an adventure in which she was to cover herself with glory, but at the same time exhaust her finances, and the political consequences of which were to be incalculable. She entered upon it with a gayety which wounds those who to-day can see the results. "Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette," the most recent historian of the war for independence has said, "when they embarked for the liberation of America, Pleasure on the prow, and the uncertain hand of Youth at the helm, might have cried out to the young republic which they fostered, '*Morituri te salutant!*' ['The doomed to die salute thee!']"

At the start all went well. From the first day our navy

showed itself equal to the English navy. On June 17 the first engagement at sea ended with a brilliant victory for France. After a hand-to-hand conflict, the captain of the "Clochetière" forced Captain Marshall to retreat, and the name of the French ship — the "Belle Poule" — immediately became popular. On July 27 the fleet of Admiral d'Orvilliers gained a decisive advantage over Admiral Keppel, which would have been a greater triumph if the Duc de Chartres, who commanded one of the squadrons, had better comprehended and carried out the signals of the admiral. The war was carried on in Europe, in America, in the Indies, with varying vicissitudes, but with great glory for our arms. On land, Lafayette and Rochambeau were the lieutenants and disciples of Washington, and on Oct. 19, 1781, gloriously forced Cornwallis to capitulate at Yorktown with eight thousand men. On the sea, D'Estaing captured the "Granada," Bouillé the "Dominique;" while Lamott, Picquet, De Grasse, Bougainville, and, above all, Suffren, sometimes victorious, sometimes beaten, but always intrepid, maintained the honour of the national flag.

The queen followed, with an anxious eagerness, every movement of our navy and of our army. "They are in the Channel," she wrote to her mother on Aug. 16, 1779, when the union of the Spanish and French fleets was preparing an invasion into England, and aroused hopes in the public which, unfortunately, were to be disappointed, — "they are now in the Channel, and I cannot think without trembling that at any moment their fate may be decided. I am frightened also at the approach of the month of September, when the sea is no longer practicable; it is to my dear mamma's bosom that I confide all my disquietude. May God grant that it be unfounded!" The failure of this campaign, undertaken at such great expense, the entrance of D'Orvilliers into Brest without having done anything, but too well justified the forebodings of Marie Antoinette.

But the queen was not discouraged; under all circumstances she loudly proclaimed her sympathy for America, and her protection for Lafayette, who was the promoter of the alliance. When, at the beginning of February, 1779, the young general returned to France, Louis XVI., in order to punish him for his disobedience, commanded him to remain a week at Paris, in the house of his father-in-law, without going anywhere. But as soon as this arrest was over, Lafayette reappeared at Versailles, where

he was the object of an enthusiastic ovation; the king himself only addressed an affectionate reprimand to him; the queen received him with eager curiosity: "Give me news of our good Americans, of our dear republicans." On his request, she sent a full-length portrait of herself to Washington. She copied with her own hand some lines from the play of Gaston and Bayard, wherein the public saw an allusion to the hero of the two worlds.

> ". . . Ah, what youth is this
> In whom we perceive the wisdom of age?
>
> . . . .
>
> I love to tread in his footsteps, copy his mien.
> His prudence I honour, rejoice in his courage:
> Grant a warrior these twain, and what matters his age?"

She used all her power to have him given a high command in the army corps which was to be sent to the aid of the United States. She assured Rochambeau of her good-will; and when the Comte d'Estaing, the happy conqueror of the "Granada," was presented to the king, on his return from the brilliant expedition which had excited in France such extraordinary enthusiasm, she condescended herself to bring him a footstool whereon he could rest his wounded leg, — a gracious attention, for which she was to be so sadly repaid.

The solicitude of the queen was incessantly on the alert concerning affairs in America, concerning the chances of the war, above all, the operations of the navy; and her heart, which has been accused of beating only in the interests of Austria, beat with incomparable force for all that touched the honour or glory of France.

When, in the month of March, 1780, they were preparing to send under the command of Rochambeau a body of troops to America, Marie Antoinette was all uneasiness. "We cannot," she said, "risk this large convoy without being sure of the sea; it would be frightful to suffer any misfortune from that. I avow I cannot think of it calmly." "The troops destined for the Islands have embarked, and are only awaiting a favourable wind to leave port," she wrote, a month later. "God grant that they may arrive in safety!" Her thought followed those vessels, which were carrying the soldiers and fortunes of France across the sea; and as if to crown these patriotic anxieties, it was in the apartment of the queen, on Nov. 19, 1781, a few days after the birth of the dauphin, that the king learned from the mouth

of the Duc de Luzerne the great and good news of the capitulation of Cornwallis, forced to surrender by the fleet of the Comte de Grasse, and the united troops of Washington and Rochambeau.

Public opinion tired sooner than the queen of these efforts of France, and of the uncertainties of the war. From the beginning of 1779, it was disposed toward peace; this inclination was much more decided after the failure of the project of a descent upon England. Austria and Russia proposed their mediation. "It would be a great good fortune," Marie Antoinette replied, "and my heart desires it more than anything in the world. But," she added proudly, "the failure of this campaign precludes all idea of a peace." In the council, Necker, who was ill disposed toward America, and concerned for the financial situation, insisted upon a prompt cessation of hostilities; Maurepas, who was always weary of anything which necessitated contention and caused embarrassment, — Maurepas made overtures to a former secretary of the English embassy to Paris. The king himself was tired of the war, and wished that it should be finished before the end of the year. Spain on her part sought to make a separate arrangement: the Americans fought but feebly, since England had offered to recognize their independence, and at bottom the two allied nations did not love each other. "Our allies," the Count von Fersen wrote, "have not always acted well toward us, and the time we have passed with them has taught us neither to love nor esteem them." Austria renewed her offers of mediation. The queen desired an agreement no less than the king and his ministers; but she desired that it should be honourable, and protested energetically against any humiliating treaty: "Peace would be a great boon; but if our enemies do not demand it, I should be greatly afflicted if we made one that was humiliating."

This peace, the object of so many prayers, finally came in 1783; it filled Marie Antoinette with joy; she never spoke of it but with pride and the sentiment of a queen, and of a French queen; for it was such an one as she had wished, — an honourable one. It acknowledged forever the independence of the allies for whom we had carried on this distant war. France, always generous, one might say too generous, demanded nothing for herself, and only gained from these campaigns an incontestable renown, trifling gratitude, and a heavy debt.

Marie Antoinette, happy in the prestige which redounded to the glory of the realm and her husband's reign, did not cease to manifest her satisfaction to all those whose bravery had contributed to this success. When, on Jan. 21, 1782, Lafayette returned unexpectedly to France, the queen, who was present at an entertainment at the Hôtel de Ville in honour of her recent confinement, wished to drive Madame Lafayette to the Hôtel de Noailles, where her husband had just arrived, in her own carriage; and when Suffren, the conqueror, appeared at Versailles, "My son," she said to the young dauphin, "learn early to hear pronounced, and to pronounce yourself, the names of the heroic defenders of your country. You have read the lives of great men in Plutarch, here is one; you must learn his name and never forget it." Captivated, like the nation, with the chivalrous and brilliant aspect of the war, the generous sovereign had not thought of the deficit which the enormous expenditures necessitated by so many armaments would make in our finances, nor of the germs of vague discontent and of restless independence which the contagion of example, the sight of institutions half understood, the attraction of novelty, the formation of an American school in place of an English school, was to implant in all minds. She thought that she had sustained a revolt; she had prepared a revolution.

The disquietudes of the war and of politics did not put an end to princely visits. France was always the centre of polite society. The court at Versailles set the fashion for all Europe; people thronged there from all sides. There came in 1780 the Princess of Hesse-Darmstadt, and the two young princesses, Louise and Charlotte, who had been brought up with Marie Antoinette at Vienna. The queen was delighted to see these friends of her childhood, whom she had not seen for ten years, and whom she loved dearly. She showed them the delights of Trianon, took them to a ball at the opera, gave them a place in her box at the play, took them for a drive in the woods of Marly and of St. Germain, accompanied them herself to shops, and with the affectionate experience of a woman of heart and a woman of taste, who feared that these Germans, but newly arrived in France, might be guilty of some eccentricities of toilet, recommended them not to make themselves too fine when coming to Trianon or to her box, and not to wear large hats when driving, and to wear at the balls given by the Comtesse Diane de Polignac,

where she herself had had them invited, only simple dresses or polonaises. She received them at her table, gave them her portrait, overwhelmed them with presents, exhausted for them every refinement of friendship, and when the princesses left France, they carried with them, beside the ineffaceable remembrance of a most agreeable reception, the promise of a correspondence, which was faithfully kept even in the days of anguish and mourning. Marie Antoinette had not the same affectionate interest, but a more political one in the visits of the Comte and Comtesse du Nord. At first sight the grand-duchess, who had a beautiful figure, though somewhat too fat for her age, and who was stiff in her bearing, and fond of displaying her learning, had displeased her. By an unusual accident, the queen, whose manners were easy, and who had always an amiable word to say, had been embarrassed before these imperial visitors; she had retired to her chamber as though overcome with faintness, and had said, on asking for a glass of water, that she had just discovered that the rôle of queen was more difficult to play in the presence of other sovereigns, or of princes destined to become sovereigns, than before courtiers. This embarrassment, however, was but momentary; and her reception of her new guests was, on the whole, as affable and gracious as usual.

Joseph II. had made travelling incognito the fashion. The Grand-duke Paul of Russia, son of Catherine II., travelled with his wife, a princess of Wurtemberg, under the name of the Comte and Comtesse du Nord. The prince had laid aside all his orders; the body-guard did not salute him; and the two wings of the door were not opened before him in the king's apartment. However, he had consented to lodge at the château, where the apartment of the Prince de Condé had been arranged for his reception. The travellers arrived in Paris on May 18, and went to Versailles on the 20th. The first interview was cold; the queen, as we have said, was disturbed; the king appeared timid, as usual. That evening, at dinner, all embarrassment disappeared. The grand-duchess exhibited wit; the grand-duke, who was extremely ugly, and had a face like a Tartar, made up for his ugliness by the vivacity of his eyes and conversation. The queen, "beautiful as the day," animated all by her presence.

The ice was broken. Three days later, the Comte and Comtesse du Nord were present at a play at Versailles in the royal box. The queen, anxious to please her guests, profited by

this occasion to offer to the countess a magnificent fan, ornamented with diamonds, and containing a lorgnette. "I know," she said graciously, "that you, like me, are somewhat near-sighted; permit me to remedy that defect, and keep this simple ornament in memory of me." "I shall keep it all my life," the princess replied; "for I shall owe to it the pleasure of being better able to see your Majesty."

Marie Antoinette could not fail to do the honours of Trianon for her guests. There was given in the theatre "Zémire et Azor" by Grétry, and "Jean Fracasse au Sérail," a ballet by Gerdet; the dances were gay, the costumes very rich, the actors excellent. After the play there was supper; after the supper an illumination. The garden looked like fairy-land; the queen enjoyed all these splendours, which were hers, and her grace and kindness and delicate thoughtfulness added to them. "How much I should like to live with her!" the Comtesse du Nord said, on the day following this entertainment. "How glad I should be if Monsieur le Comte du Nord were dauphin of France!"

Then on Saturday, June 8, there was a fancy-dress ball at Versailles. The salons, and especially the gallery, were beautifully decorated with a profusion of candles and *girandoles*. The whole court was in full dress, the king having ordered that every one should be as brilliant as possible, or not appear. The ladies who danced wore dominoes of white satin, with little *paniers* and little queues. But the queen outshone every one. "She had a manner of walking," an eye-witness said, "a graceful majesty in the carriage of her head, which was peculiar to her." The crowd, eager to see, pressed about her with such indiscretion that for a moment the king, feeling himself pushed, complained; the grand-duke, who was near him, retreated for an instant. "Sire," he said, "pardon me; I have become so like the French that I, like them, thought that I could not approach your Majesty too closely."

An early friend of the grand-duchess, who accompanied her on this voyage, — the Baroness von Oberkirche, — relates that during this festival she found herself for a moment behind Marie Antoinette.

"'Madame von Oberkirche,' the queen said to me, 'speak a little German to me, to see if I remember it. I only know the language of my new country.' I spoke a few words in German. She remained thoughtful for a few seconds without replying. 'Ah,' she said finally, 'I'm none the

less happy to hear the old German; you speak like a Saxon, without any Alsatian accent, which astonishes me. German is a beautiful language; but it seems to me that French, in the mouth of my children, is the sweetest in the world.' "

After this ball, which ended early, there was a supper at the house of the Princesse de Lamballe. The queen was there. The number was small, but very select. They played loto, then danced. This little improvised ball was much gayer than the other. The king, according to his custom, only just appeared. After his departure, respect no longer interfered with pleasure, and all were very well content with a sort of intimacy which was not disagreeable to the queen. In imitation of the sovereign, the royal family gave splendid entertainments to the august visitors. More tactful and thoughtful than the Archduke Maximilian, the Comte and Comtesse du Nord had taken care to send, on the day following their arrival, their cards to the princes and princesses of the blood. Flattered by this attention from the future emperor of all the Russias, they vied with one another in prodigalities for their reception. The Duc d'Orléans gave them a dinner at Raincy; the Comte d'Artois offered them a magnificent concert and a gay collation at Bagatelle. At Sceaux, the excellent and venerable Duc de Penthièvre gave them an exquisite breakfast, followed by a drive through the park, of which the prince was eager himself to do the honours.

But of all these entertainments, none could claim the brilliancy of those at Chantilly. The hospitality of the Condés was proverbial, and the reception of June 10, 1782, did not belie their reputation. There was a general illumination of the château and park, a hunt, a concert in the mysterious pavilion, where, seated upon soft sofas, one listened to invisible musicians. One might have fancied one was listening to the angels in heaven. Afterward a ball in the open-air ball-room; a supper on the Island of Love, or in the hamlet, for Madame de Condé had her hamlet at Chantilly, as the queen had hers at Trianon; and finally another hunt by torchlight. The hunt was also one of the traditional amusements of the Condés. When they finally separated, the prince said to the grand-duke, "We shall be very far from each other, but if your Highness permits it, and the king does not object, I may go some day to St. Petersburg, to return the visit which you have done me the honour to make me."

"We shall receive you with enthusiasm, Monsieur; and the empress will be very happy to see you in our savage country."

"Alas! it is only a dream," replied the Comte de Condé, with a sigh.

How could he imagine that this journey to Russia, which he now looked upon as a dream, he should make fifteen years later as a proscribed person, while that beautiful Chantilly, whose honours he did with such noble prodigality, would be only a ruin open to the winds of heaven?

At that moment he heard only murmurs which flattered his ears; the fame of the magnificence of Chantilly had spread over all Europe, and this saying was circulated to the honour of the Condés: "The king received Monsieur le Comte du Nord like a friend; Monsieur le Comte d'Orléans received him like a *bourgeois*, and Monsieur le Prince de Condé, like a sovereign."

With the public the success of the Comte and Comtesse du Nord was not less great than at court. Paris was infatuated with the future czar and czarina of all the Russias, as it had been infatuated with the emperor of Germany. Philosophers and men of letters offered them incense. La Harpe read them his translation of Lucian; Beaumarchais, his "Mariage de Figaro;" at the Académie des Sciences, Condorcet addressed them; at the Théâtre Français, verses were recited in their honour. Before their departure the king gave them some splendid tapestries from Gobelin; the queen had a magnificent toilet set of Sèvres porcelain, blue lapis, decorated with painting and enamel, and mounted in gold, presented to them in a most delicate manner. "*Mon Dieu*, how beautiful it is!" the grand-duchess said on seeing it; "it is without doubt for the queen." "Madame," the superintendent, the Comte d'Angivilliers, replied, "the queen offers it to Madame la Comtesse du Nord; she hopes that it will be agreeable to her, and that she will keep it in memory of her Majesty." And on looking at it a little more closely, the princess saw that it bore her arms.

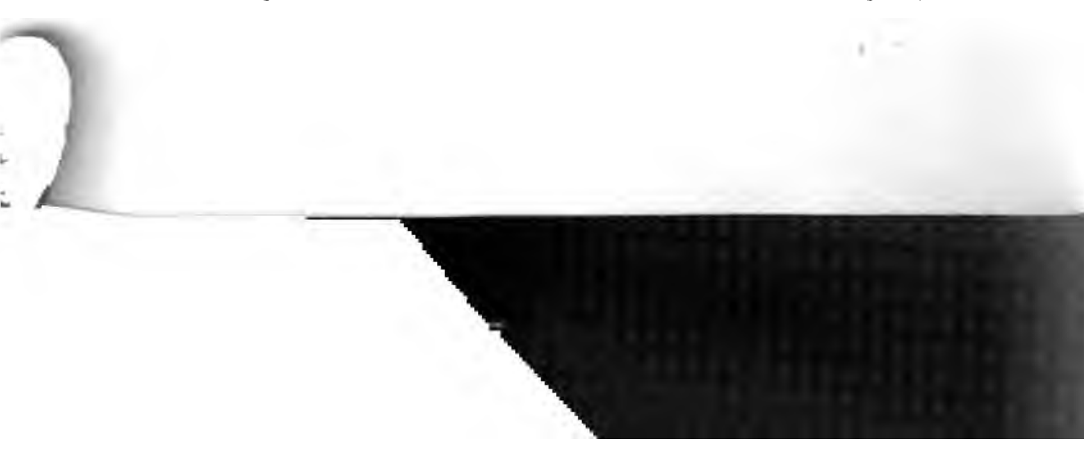
On June 19, the Comte and Comtesse du Nord quitted Paris, and after having breakfasted at Choisy, set out to travel through France on their way back to Russia.

Two years later the king of Sweden came in his turn. But of what use to describe all these princely visits? There are always the same details, above all, the same love of incognito. The king of Sweden, under the name of the Comte de Haga, arrived

so unexpectedly on June 9, 1784, that Louis XVI., warned in haste at Rambouillet, returned precipitately to Versailles, and the key of his apartment having been lost, could only appear before his guest in the most extraordinary costume, wearing one shoe with a red heel, and another with a black, a gold buckle and a silver buckle. With the exception of this unusual incident, it would seem that there was the same invariable programme for all these august visitors, to which they all scrupulously conformed, — a supper at Versailles, a performance at the opera, at the Théâtre Français, at the Comédie Italienne, accompanied by the plaudits of the public, an audience of Parliament, a session at the Académie, a visit to personages of renown and places of amusement, and to crown all, an entertainment at Trianon.

It was Marie Antoinette's coquetry, since she no longer danced, being too old, herself to do the honours of her château to the crowned heads; she displayed no longer the official politeness of the sovereign, but the charming cordiality of a woman of the world; she was no longer queen, but mistress of her house. On that day there was a play in the theatre; they gave the "Dormeur Éveillé," by Marmontel and Grétry, with magnificent scenery and ballet; then a supper under the trees, and an illumination of the English gardens. Numerous guests filled the park; all the ladies were in white. "It was like fairy-land," Gustavus III. himself wrote, "a scene worthy of the Elysian fields." At supper the queen did not wish to take her place at table; she was entirely occupied with doing the honours. With that exquisite tact and bewitching grace which were among her charms, she conversed from preference with the Swedes, and affected to receive them with great cordiality. Madame Campan asserts that Marie Antoinette was prejudiced against Gustavus III., and received him coldly. All that we know of this journey and the relations between the two sovereigns seems to contradict the assertion of Madame Campan; and if the little scene which she describes, wherein the queen gave a lesson to the Comte de Haga, really took place in the way she describes, it was but a momentary ebullition of anger which was quickly forgotten. The correspondence of Marie Antoinette and the king of Sweden bears the impress of the greatest cordiality.

In the preceding year, when the young woman had had a miscarriage, Gustavus had exhibited the most touching sympathy



for her, "like a good gentleman, who was sincerely touched by any misfortune that could happen to his friend." And it would seem that the queen was not less attached to the king of Sweden than the king of Sweden to the queen. The prince having expressed the desire that the nephew of Cardinal Bernis, in whom he was interested, should be made coadjutor of Alby, it was Marie Antoinette who undertook to overcome the obstacles in the way of the realization of this wish; and having obtained the favour, it was she who hastened to announce it to her royal correspondent. Was not Gustavus III. right when he wrote a few years before to the Comte de Stedingk, "It is natural to be attached to the queen"?

The novelty then in fashion was a balloon. "One lost on them," a chronicler has wittily said, "not only meat and drink, but even loto." On the 5th of June, 1783, Montgolfier had made the first experiment at Annonay; he had repeated it on September 19 of the same year, on the Place d'Armes at Versailles, before the king and queen, in the midst of an immense crowd. They desired that the Comte de Haga should witness this diversion; and on June 23, 1784, Pilatre des Rosiers, who was to perish so miserably the following year, and Proust, a professor of chemistry, set out from the court of the ministers in the count's presence, rising to a great distance to descend, three quarters of an hour later, in the forest of Chantilly. The balloon, ornamented with the initials of the two kings, and with a white armlet in honour of the king of Sweden, bore the name which then was still dear to France: it was called "The Marie Antoinette."

Finally in that same year, 1784, in the month of August, Prince Henry, brother of Frederick II., made a journey to France, more from policy, perhaps, than for pleasure; but the queen had little love for anything Prussian, and, despite the admiration of the enthusiastic Prussians, who much preferred this new visitor to the one who had been there in June, she saw the prince only two or three times, and so briefly that she had but a vague idea of him.

"I have not yet had many opportunities of seeing Prince Henry," she wrote to the king of Sweden on Oct. 21, "because since his arrival here I have passed most of my time at Trianon, where I have received only the persons I know best, and always but a few at a time. . . . Moreover, Monsieur le Comte de Haga may rest assured that the compliments and civilities of Prince Henry cannot make me forget him, or the time he spent here."

And she added, in speaking of her sojourn at Trianon, "This kind of life is best suited to my health, and to the beginning of my pregnancy, which progresses happily." The queen was pregnant for the fourth time. In the preceding autumn, she had had an accident at Fontainebleau which had greatly distressed her; but happily her health had not been injured, and at the end of the year, Louis XVI. announced joyously to his brother-in-law, Joseph II., that he was expecting a second son.

This second son was born on March 27, 1785, on Easter. This time, although she had suffered during her pregnancy, and particularly during the last of it, and had had fears which had determined her to order her conscience and to redouble her devotion, no such accidents occurred as had marked the birth of Madame Royale; her deliverance was fortunate, and so prompt that at Paris one heard of her travail and of the birth at the same time. The child, like its brother and sister, was baptized on the same day in the chapel of the château, under the name of Louis Charles, Duc de Normandie. He had for godfather, Monsieur le Comte de Provence, and for godmother, the queen of the two Sicilys, Marie Caroline of Lorraine, represented by Madame Elisabeth.

On the following day, Paris celebrated this great event with public rejoicings; distributions of provisions were made among the people; fifteen fountains poured forth wine in profusion; a bonfire was lighted on the Place de Grève, and in the evening the entire city was illuminated. What was better worth while, all the debtors for nurses retained in La Force were set free. On the 1st of April, a solemn *Te Deum* was sung in Notre Dame. On May 24, the queen came in her turn to the old cathedral to render thanks unto God for her third child.

The ceremony was brilliant, as usual. In the morning the *corps de ville*, in their velvet robes, assembled at the Hôtel de Ville, and afterward went to fetch the Duc de Brissac, governor of Paris; then with the escort of the Guards of Paris and the Swiss Guards, they betook themselves in their gala coaches to the Gate of the Conference, to await the queen. The French Guards and the Swiss Guards formed the line. At nine o'clock the cannon from the Invalides announced the arrival of the royal *cortége*. The *corps de ville* advanced to meet it, knelt down, and the provost of merchants, after being presented by the governor, addressed his congratulations to Marie Antoinette. The latter

replied with her habitual grace; then the door of the carriage was closed, and the *cortége* continued its way to the cathedral. The queen there performed her devotions; she afterward knelt at Ste. Geneviève, and joined in the prayers for the end of the frightful drought which was then desolating France. Later she went to dine at the Tuileries. Then she went to the opera with her sister-in-law, Madame Elisabeth, then to the Temple to sup with the Comte d'Artois. After supper she entered her carriage, and following the boulevard, was driven to the Place Louis XV., to see the fireworks and the illumination of the colonnade.

On the following day, Marie Antoinette dined with her friend the Princesse de Lamballe, and afterward went to the Comédie Italienne, then returned to Versailles. The acclamations, which were rare in the city, had been warmer at the opera, and the queen had replied to them, a chronicler has said, "by more frequent and gracious reverences than usual."

The young prince had received, on the very day of his birth, the ribbon of the St. Esprit; then he had been placed, with his brother and sister, in the hands of the governess of the Children of France. This was no longer, as at the previous confinements of the queen, the Princesse de Guéménée; a frightful catastrophe had forced her to quit Versailles. In the month of September, 1782, after having been previously announced two or three times, the bankruptcy of the Prince de Guéménée had been declared. "It was the bankruptcy of a sovereign," some one said, in allusion to the pretensions of the De Rohans to be treated as a royal house. The deficit was not less than twenty-eight millions. There was in all Paris and in all France a general hue and cry. All classes of society suffered: besides the nobles, such as the Duc de Lauzun and the Comte de Coislin, and men of letters, such as Thomas, and the Abbé de Lille, there were found among the creditors — and these were the ones who suffered most — servants, small merchants, porters, the Breton sailors, who had carried their savings to the descendant of the Duc de Bretagne. The prince, by his prodigalities, the princess, by her expenditures, to which she was indeed forced by her position, had squandered everything. The Rohans made unheard-of efforts to hush up the sad affair; Madame de Guéménée gave up her diamonds; Madame de Marsan sold her horses; the Duchesse de Montbazan returned her jewels to the jewellers who had furnished them. But after such a scandal Madame de

Guéménée could not remain at court; she handed in her resignation as governess to the Children of France.

Who should replace her? Several names suggested themselves to the queen. But the Princesse de Chimay seemed to her too austere; the Duchesse de Duras too learned and too witty.

Public rumour hinted at the Duchesse de Polignac; but did she desire it? "I know her," the queen said. "This office would in no way conform to her simple and quiet tastes and to a sort of indolence of character; it would be the greatest proof of devotion she could give me if she should yield to my desires." When Monsieur de Besenval went to speak to Marie Antoinette of the rumour, as a deputy from the relatives and friends of the duchess, who were always eager to augment an influence which they found to their advantage, "Madame de Polignac?" she replied. "I thought you knew her better; she does not wish for the place." And, in fact, Madame de Polignac, who was of a calm and somewhat indolent disposition, recoiled before a title whose chain was heavy. But her friends desired for her the prestige which this office would give her, which was one of the most important of the perpetual ones. They urged her; the queen insisted; and the favourite, moved by the desire of her royal protectress, and accustomed, thanks to her very indolence, to yield to the importunities of those around her, ended by accepting. She was nominated, and the queen was happy. At bottom, what Marie Antoinette desired was to be, under cover of her friend, the governess of her children herself. Thanks to this choice, it was possible for her, without fear of trespassing against etiquette, or hurting any one's vanity, to direct as she desired their education, and to forget near them at any hour of the day the chagrin which was beginning to assail her, and the responsibilities of politics, in which the fatality of the time constrained her to mingle.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Queen in Politics; her Natural Distaste for Affairs.—Distrust of Maurepas.—Letter from the Queen to Joseph II.—Appointment of Messieurs de Ségur and de Castries.—The Queen's Sympathy for Necker; she supports him in the Publication of his Accounts.—The Fall of Necker.—The Death of Maurepas.—Joly de Fleury.—D'Ormesson.—Calonne.—The Small Part that Marie Antoinette took in the Nomination of the Latter; her Dislike of him.—Austrian Politics.—The Election of Maximilian at Cologne.—The Dispute of Joseph II. with Holland.—"The Marriage of Figaro."—The Queen plays "The Barber of Seville" at Trianon.

THE queen had never cared for politics, and everything had conspired to keep her aloof from them,—her own dislike, which the importunities of her mother and the counsels of Mercy had not always succeeded in conquering; her education, which had only been directed toward accomplishments; the traditions of a court where since Anne of Austria no wife of the king had ever taken part in affairs; the distrust of the ministers, who feared the irresistible ascendancy which Marie Antoinette could not fail to take should she one day bring to bear on the complications of politics the whole strength of a mind quick, just, firm, and persuasive.

"The more I have the honour of seeing the queen," the Baron de Staël wrote, "the more am I strengthened in the opinion I have always held of the excellence of her character. She loves truth, and one can speak it to her if she be persuaded of the probity and disinterestedness of him who speaks. In discoursing with nobility and frankness one is sure to please her, even if one holds an opinion contrary to her own; as soon as she discovers falseness or flattery, she has a horror of them."

It was this very excellence of character which the ministers feared. Vergennes and Maurepas, above all, endeavoured to keep the king on his guard against all interference of the queen in affairs. The old minister, urged by his wife, who ruled him

completely, and who as aunt of the Duc d'Aiguillon bore no love to Marie Antoinette, under a mask of respect and deference combated with obstinate perseverance and the experience of a diplomat the possible influence of the young sovereign. Madame Campan even accuses him of having sought to compromise her. When the malice of courtiers had tried to use her promenades on the terrace at Versailles against Marie Antoinette, Maurepas "had had the cruel policy to reply to the king that he should allow her to do as she pleased; that she had intelligence; that her friends were ambitious, and desirous of seeing her take part in affairs; and that it was best to allow her to gain a reputation for lévity." It does not seem probable that the astute old man would have dared to use any such language to his master; Louis XVI. would not have allowed it. But that he was inwardly delighted at the queen's taste for frivolity; that he discreetly insinuated these very thoughts, which he dared not publicly express; that he encouraged in secret the young woman to give herself up to amusement, and the king not to talk to her of affairs, or to hide them from her; that he had even redoubled his efforts after the first pregnancy of the queen had strengthened the friendship of husband and wife, to prevent the "sensibility of his master from having any influence over affairs in general," — does not appear doubtful. The most authentic documents, the secret reports of the ambassador from Austria and of the minister from Prussia, establish it irrefutably, and the queen herself laboured under no illusion as to the situation in which she was placed.

"He — the king — is naturally little gallant," she wrote to her brother; "and it often happens that he does not talk to me of important affairs, even when he has no desire to hide them from me. He replies when I question him, but he does not broach them; and when I learn the quarter of an affair, I have need of much address to get the ministers to tell me the rest of it by allowing them to believe that the king has told me all. When I reproach the king for not having spoken to me of certain things, he does not grow angry, but has a somewhat embarrassed air, and sometimes answers naturally that he had not thought of it. I confess to you that political affairs are those in which I take the least interest. The natural mistrust of the king was originally fortified by his governor; even before his marriage Monsieur de la Vauguyon had made him afraid of the empire which his wife might gain over him, and his dark soul had amused itself by frightening his pupil with all the phantoms invented against the House of Austria.

Monsieur de Maurepas, although possessed of less character and malice, has thought it advantageous to his power to encourage the king in these ideas. Monsieur de Vergennes follows the same course, and perhaps makes use of his correspondence with foreign affairs to introduce falsity and lies. I have spoken to the king frankly on this subject more than once. He has sometimes answered me angrily, and as he is incapable of discussion, I have not been able to convince him that his minister was deceived, or deceived him. I am not blind with regard to my influence; I know that as far as politics are concerned, I have little ascendancy over the king."

The queen was repeatedly advised to conciliate Maurepas, either to win him over by favours, or to intimidate him by her ascendancy, but under no circumstances to arouse his antagonism by affecting to get on without him; to make of him an ally and not an adversary. The king himself urged her to do so. She had never consented, and had never been willing to win the minister either by force or kindness. Was this owing to the pressure of those about her, to the insinuations of Choiseul's partisans, as Von Goltz and Mercy believed? Or was it simply natural pride or indifference to affairs? Whatever it was, during the first years of her reign, save the part she took in the dismissal of Turgot—a part to be regretted, but wherein she was fully in accord with public opinion, excited against the reforms of the minister—and her interest in the affair of Bavaria, the true extent of which interest we have shown, she had always held aloof from politics. It was not till 1780 that she seemed disposed to concern herself with affairs, and, as Mercy says, with important affairs; and then her intervention was limited to influencing the appointment of a minister, the minister of war.

When in September, 1777, the Comte de Saint-Germain fell before the storms incited by his innovations, the Prince de Montbarrey, assistant-director, remained alone in charge of the department; but his talents were by no means equal to the heavy burden which he had assumed. Brave and witty, but disliking work, unable to resist the solicitations of women or the importunities of the courtiers, he allowed discipline to become lax, and disorder to creep into his administration. Maurepas alone, and his wife, a relative of Madame de Montbarrey, supported him; but the clamour of the army became too strong. The minister was allowed to hand in his resignation and was obliged to retire; and public opinion approved of his disgrace. The Polignac

set wished to have the Comte d'Adhémar appointed in his place; the queen opposed him, and despite Maurepas, who proposed Monsieur de Puységur, or his nephew, the Duc d'Aiguillon, had the portfolio of war given to Monsieur de Ségur, lieutenant-general, — a brave officer, who had acquitted himself well in the campaign in Flanders, and lost an arm at the battle of Laufeld. On the day he was presented, the queen said to Madame Campan, "You have just seen a minister according to my way of thinking. I have no anxiety for the king's service: the appointment is an excellent one; but I am almost sorry for the part which I took in it. I have assumed a responsibility; I should be happy not to have any, and to escape from it always as much as possible. I have just promised Monsieur de Ségur, and that on my word of honour, not to recommend any applicant, and in no wise to interfere with any of his operations by petitions for my protégés."

If we turn to the Memoirs of the Comte de Ségur, we shall find that Marie Antoinette was not always faithful to this promise, and that one day her demands were so pressing that the old officer, growing impatient, wished to hand in his resignation. The queen was displeased; but after a long interview with the minister's son, she understood his reasons. "Say to your father," she said to him, "that we are reconciled, and that I am only angry with him for the temper he showed in offering his resignation." With this exception, Marie Antoinette had no cause to repent of her appointment. Monsieur de Ségur, who had been made marshal in 1783, was very superior to his predecessor both in talent and in character; and the most of the measures which he undertook did honour to the minister and his protectress.

For a long time it was believed that the queen had done as much for the navy as she had for the department of war, and that she had contributed to the dismissal of Sartines, and to the elevation of the Marquis de Castries. The truth is that this nomination, which, moreover, was no surprise, was due solely to an intrigue of Madame de Polignac, of the Comte de Vaudreuil, and of the comptroller-general, who was a friend of Monsieur de Castries. Marie Antoinette had no part in it; she had always protected Castries, and she continued to do so to the end, and aided in obtaining for him an excellent pension.

It was Maurepas, who, deceived by false information, and

believing himself to be doing an act of great policy, had himself lent a hand to the combination proposed by Necker. He avenged himself by dismissing Necker in his turn, by means of a little strategy, analogous to the one of which he had been the dupe.

The queen was afflicted at this disgrace. Despite the lack of *savoir vivre* of the Genevan, who on his presentation had familiarly taken her hand and kissed it without her permission, she liked Necker, and for a long time shared the popular infatuation for him. It was she in great part who, despite Maurepas, had induced Louis XVI. to authorize the publication of the famous "Account," which was the first appeal to the intervention of public opinion in the management of the finances and the administration of the State. But the old minister redoubled his attacks; his cutting pleasantries on the subject of the "Account," which he called in jest the *Conte bleu*, the criticisms incited by the innovations of the comptroller-general, which many considered dangerous, his pretensions, often indiscreet, finished in a short time by undermining his credit; and on May 19, 1791, he handed in his resignation, despite the queen's efforts to prevent his fall, and to induce him to remain. The clamour at this fall was great: "All impartial persons are grieved," a lady of the court wrote. Public opinion at Paris and in the country became alarmed; one saw in the event almost the ruin of the credit of France. The system of Necker, who supplemented the taxes by loans, flattered a light and frivolous nation, who only saw the momentary relief, without thinking of the inevitable burdens entailed in the future, and who did not calculate that the loans, whose actual revenues did not suffice to pay the interest on them, would lead fatally and with brief delay to crushing taxes, or to a disastrous bankruptcy. The complaints were widespread among the public; the most moderate, even those who blamed certain of Necker's plans, said that one might have restrained his imagination while profiting by his talent for finance. As for the queen, she openly avowed her regret; she shut herself up in her room for an entire day to weep, and hastened to write to her brother that she had in no way participated in this change of ministers, and that she was very sorry for it.

Maurepas did not long enjoy his victory. The old minister was visibly failing; violent attacks of a disease to which he was subject — the gout — tormented him incessantly. In the month

of November, 1781, the disease became more serious; gangrene set in, and all hope was given up. When the Duc de Lauzun brought to Paris the brilliant news of the capitulation of Cornwallis, and some one went to announce it to the prime minister, "I am no longer of this world," he replied. He none the less had the messenger enter; but the interview was short; the old man was dying. On the 16th the last sacrament was administered to him; on the 21st, at eleven o'clock of the evening, he ceased to breathe.

He passed away in an hour of triumph, — a triumph too fugitive, alas! one which could not conceal or dissipate the perils of the future. From the ministers of Louis XV. Maurepas had inherited a France exhausted, discontented, agitated by inward throes which preceded and presaged a revolution. After seven years and a half of the absolute power which the king had allowed him, he disappeared from the scene, leaving the situation as disturbed as in the beginning, the finances as exhausted, an uncertain policy, and an authority less respected than ever. Attacked at each instant by those pamphlets which he loved so dearly, and those songs in which he was a past master; a thousand germs of revolt having been excited among the populace; the public having been irritated by deceptions, and the more exacting because it had been deceived, — the incurable frivolity of the old minister had allowed all the springs to become relaxed, the resources to dissipate themselves in pure loss. He left the ship of State — on which, according to the saying of a contemporary, he had been a passenger rather than a pilot — destitute of a rudder, and exposed to every storm.

Louis XVI. none the less regretted this minister, whom he was wont to consider as his mentor, and for whom the ties of habit had become those of friendship. "Ah," he said, with tears in his eyes, when he learned of Maurepas's death, "I shall no longer hear my old friend overhead every morning." He had shown the minister every attention during his last illness, and had himself announced the birth of the dauphin to him. When the queen sought to console the king, he replied that he should never forget the sacrifices which Monsieur de Maurepas had made for him, in leaving his estates and the agreeable life which he could there have led, to come to serve him as a father.

Who was to receive this difficult heritage? The subject had occupied many minds for a long time, as the age of the prime

minister warranted neither long hopes nor long years. Some named the Duc de Nivernais, whom the king of Prussia favoured, so it was said. Others inclined toward Sartines, toward Machault, toward D'Ossun. Choiseul or Necker were again spoken of,—the two whom an epigram called "receipt and expenditure." Madame Adélaïde, again in favour, urged the Cardinal de Bernis. The queen, who kept a vigilant watch on this point, and who, a chronicler said, "had the delicacy not to wish to share with any one an intimacy which she flattered herself she alone merited, both by her zeal for the State and her attachment to the king, and by the purity of her views,"—the queen would have preferred the archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne, a friend of Vermond, who had the reputation of being an eminent administrator; but she dared not propose him, knowing her husband's absolute repugnance to invest any one with so important a title, and his extreme fear of being governed. She was not wrong; Louis XVI. took no prime minister, and Maurepas had no successor. Vergennes, the principal personage in the cabinet, became the directing minister, without, however, having the title.

Joly de Fleury had succeeded Necker, and was minister of finance; but having neither the cleverness nor popularity of his predecessor, he soon fell beneath the weight of his many mistakes. D'Ormesson, who took his place on the express desire of the king, with the title of comptroller-general, which was re-established for him, joined to a name made illustrious in Parliament a reputation for integrity beyond proof. He was only thirty-one years old, and alleged his youth and inexperience as an excuse for refusing the perilous post which was offered him. "I am younger than you," Louis XVI. replied; "and my position is more difficult than the one I confide to you." Marie Antoinette was pleased at this appointment; and the approbation which she openly expressed was the more meritorious in that D'Ormesson had not hesitated to expose himself to her displeasure. Before his appointment as comptroller-general, a historian relates, he had come in direct opposition to the queen in his quality as councillor of State charged with the direction of St. Cyr. The queen having recommended some young persons to him whom she wished to have placed in that house, he had laid before the king a list which contained their names, and on the margin that of their protectress; but on the same list he had presented other

young persons, without support, whose rights he advocated, and Louis XVI. had chosen the latter.

D'Ormesson brought to his office the same austerity of principle and the same disinterestedness that he had shown in the government of St. Cyr. Unfortunately, in so delicate a matter neither honesty nor determined energy could take the place of acquired experience. D'Ormesson made mistakes; his ill-contrived operations displeased business men; his probity irritated the courtiers. They ridiculed his honesty; and at the end of seven months he was obliged to retire.

Intrigues were again on foot; many names were advanced: Sénac de Meilhan, intendant of Hainaut; Foulon, former intendant of Paris; Loménie de Brienne, archbishop of Toulouse. It was the intendant of Flanders, Monsieur de Calonne, who won; he was named comptroller-general on Oct. 23, 1783.

Twenty years before, a minister of Louis XV., Monsieur de Boynes, had written the following lines concerning this personage: —

"Whatever one may say concerning Monsieur de Calonne, I still suspend my judgment of him; but for the present he seems to me to be a man of more brilliant than solid parts, to be possessed of more versatility than capacity. I fear that he owes his reputation to the ease with which he expresses himself, and to a certain pleasing air, which succeeds especially with women."

Monsieur de Boynes was not mistaken. Light, brilliant, witty, amiable in the full acceptation of the term, with a handsome face and a keen and piercing look, of a well-turned figure, a noble and easy politeness, without haughtiness or pretension, with a sort of responsible air, which marked the man in office, a lively intelligence, fertile in expedients rather than in resource, clever at intrigue rather than great enterprises, more solicitous of his elegance than his gravity, with a great talent for work, but an insurmountable horror of figures, and of incurable frivolity, Monsieur de Calonne had all the qualities of a man of the world, but very few of those of a statesman, and still less of those of a financier. He was a genius, moreover, who was eminently dangerous, because people were easily taken in by his deductions, drawn from false premises and untrustworthy data, and because his imagination conceived, and his eloquence caused to be adopted, measures which neither good sense nor good reason could countenance.

Formerly favoured by Choiseul, and successively intendant of Rennes, of Metz, and of Lille, but burdened with debts, owing everybody, he had scented the comptroller-generalship for a long time. On the fall of Necker, to which he had contributed by his pamphlets, some of which — his "Why," and his "Letter from the Marquis Caraccioli" — had enjoyed great success, he had hoped to arrive at this end. He played picquet with Madame de Maurepas, and courted Monsieur de Maurepas; but the old minister had replied warmly to a person who had spoken to him of Calonne as a successor to Necker, "Fie, then! he is a fool, a basket with a hole in the bottom! Put the finances in his hands! The royal treasury would soon be as dry as his purse!" Joly de Fleury, then D'Ormesson, had been preferred.

Calonne, however, had not been discouraged. Repulsed by the prime minister, repelled by the king, looked upon with disfavour by the queen, he turned to the capitalists, to the courtiers, and to the princes. He said, or caused to be said, that he alone knew the means of directing the finances of a great monarchy so as to bring abundance to the royal treasury without descending to the petty economies which had so stupidly depressed the court. In a word, the people would see that he knew how to conciliate the interests of public and private fortune. It was thought that he had superior talents because he treated the most serious things lightly. The Comte d'Artois was won over; Madame de Polignac and the Comte de Vaudreuil were infatuated; the lieutenant of police, Lenoir, was interested; the court banker, Monsieur d'Harvelay, whose wife was Calonne's mistress, undertook to win over Vergennes, and when D'Ormesson handed in his resignation, all the batteries were ready. Madame de Polignac, seconded by the Baron de Breteuil, betook herself to the queen to implore her patronage for her protégé. The queen resisted for some time; but finally, importuned by her favourite and urged by a man in whom she had confidence, Breteuil, she promised, not to advocate the appointment of Monsieur de Calonne, but to confer with the king concerning it on the following day; and on that day the appeals of Madame de Polignac, the importunities of Monsieur de Vaudreuil, of the Duc de Coïgny, and of the Comte d'Artois, the complaisance and, it was thought, the secret support of Monsieur de Vergennes, wrung from the two sovereigns the nomination of a man for whom they had neither taste, liking, nor esteem, but who had the sympathies of "beautiful women."

The queen soon repented; she was provoked with Madame de Polignac for her intervention in the affair, and did not hide her displeasure. One day she allowed herself to say to the duchess that the finances had passed from the hands of an honest man without talent to those of a clever intriguer. Calonne heard of it; he did everything to conquer the dislike of his sovereign, and to win her good grace, seeking to divine her smallest desires, forestalling all that she could demand, even flattering her love for good deeds, and endeavouring to take advantage of her charity. During the very severe winter of 1783 and 1784 the king had given three million livres to the poor; Calonne had come to the queen to offer to give her one of them, in order that she might distribute it in her name, and according to her desire. The queen declined, and replied that the whole sum should be distributed in the name of the king; that as for her, she should deprive herself of certain things in order to add to the relief of the unfortunate people as far as her savings would permit. When Calonne departed, she called Madame Campan and said to her, "Congratulate me; I have just escaped a trap, or at least something which in the end would have caused me great annoyance;" and she added, "That man will succeed in ruining the finances of the State. They say that I appointed him; they have made the people believe that I am prodigal. I have just declined a sum from the royal treasury, and even for the most respectable uses have never desired that any money should pass through my hands."

Despite the efforts of the comptroller-general, the queen was inflexible; the very attentions which he affected to show her redoubled her aversion to him; and Calonne, in his turn, obstinately repulsed by Marie Antoinette, became one of her most implacable enemies. We shall find proof of this later.

At this moment the attention of the young sovereign was absorbed by a more important matter.

The restless ambition of Joseph II. sought everywhere to enlarge and increase the influence of Austria. In 1780 one of the archdukes, Maximilian, had been elected coadjutor of Cologne. Maria Theresa, who was still living, had appealed, with that unctuous and pressing insistence of which she so well knew the secret, to her daughter; she had represented to her that for her own good and that of France it was necessary to circumvent the evil intentions of Frederick II., "that wicked neighbour, dangerous to our 'holy religion,' dangerous to France and Austria,

whose interests were identical." Marie Antoinette, who was still very sensitive to everything that personally concerned her brothers and sisters, and in particular Maximilian, — Marie Antoinette, who held the king of Prussia "in horror," had warmly espoused her brother's cause. She had spoken to Maurepas; and Vergennes having made no serious objection, and the king having approved, the French minister to Cologne, the Comte de Châlons, had worked for the archduke, who had been elected coadjutor of Cologne and of Münster, with the future succession.

Four years later the affair threatened to become more serious; it was no longer a question concerning the empire, but concerning Europe. Maria Theresa was dead; and Joseph II. had neither the wisdom of his mother nor the high consideration which she enjoyed from the whole world. He had even wounded French sentiment during the American war, by not sufficiently hiding his sympathy with England, and by announcing his intention of visiting that country, which at such a time had also hurt Marie Antoinette. None the less it was to his sister that he turned when his affairs became embroiled.

The treaties of 1715 had closed the mouths of the Scheldt, and given them in charge of Holland. The emperor bore with impatience this arrangement, which was so disadvantageous to the commerce of the Lower Countries, and, above all, to that of Antwerp. Already during the war in America, he had broached the subject and had even made overtures to France, who, while not opposing any serious objection, had asked him to wait until after the peace. When the peace was signed, he reopened the affair, demanded the free navigation of the river, and on the refusal of the States-General gave the order to one of his ships to force a passage. The Hollanders fired upon the ship and captured it. Immediately an Austrian army was assembled on the frontier; and the States-General, in alarm, solicited the aid of France. At Paris and Versailles popular opinion, always prejudiced against the ambitions of the House of Hapsburg, pronounced energetically in favour of Holland. The ministers met and demanded prompt action against Austria. And the most ardent against these projects of Joseph II. were those persons whom public opinion regarded as the protégés of Marie Antoinette, — the minister of war, Ségur, the minister of the marine, Castries, and the former French ambassador to Vienna, the Baron de Breteuil.

To avoid any explosion, the emperor wrote to his sister. As early as 1783 he had complained of the unfriendly disposition of France, who, he said, too easily forgot the advantages which she gained from the Austrian alliance, and wished to reserve to herself alone all the benefits. In 1784 he renewed his complaints and his demands. The queen only opposed a plea in bar to these recriminations; her influence, she said, was far from being as strong as he imagined. Would it be prudent for her to have scenes with the ministers concerning an affair in which she was sure the king would not second her? Louis XVI., appealed to, in his turn, offered his mediation and nothing more. The emperor was displeased at this coldness, and did not hide his indignation. "As long as France was engaged in the American war," he said to La Marck, "I abstained from pressing my rights upon Holland, although it would then have been difficult for France to oppose them. They should repay me at Versailles for the confidence and moderation which I showed at that time."

In the letter which he addressed to his sister he protested again that he was looking for no territorial aggrandizement on the side of the Low Countries, but simply a reparation of the insult offered to his flag. With the king he was more explicit; he demanded the cession of the fortress of Maestricht, and of its territory, and a few days later he had Mercy communicate to the cabinet of Versailles a memorandum in which he joined the agreement with Holland to a project of exchange of the Lower Countries for Bavaria, — a project to which, he said, neither the elector-palatine nor the Duc de Deux-Ponts would be hostile.

This was contrary to the stipulations of the peace of Teschen. The king pointed this out to the emperor, who renounced this new pretension.

But the Holland question did not progress. The tempers became bitter on both sides. The queen did all she could to pacify them; she talked in vain to the king, to Vergennes, even delaying sending a note in the hope that in the interval a more conciliatory reply might arrive from Vienna. The situation became strained. The States-General delayed payment. Joseph II., instigated by Leopold, sent them his ultimatum; and in reply, an order was given to assemble two French corps, — one on the borders of the Rhine, the other on the frontiers of Flanders, — under the orders of the Prince de Condé.

The queen was alarmed to the last degree; her affections, her

interests, were at stake; her heart and her reason revolted against a war which would have been in her eyes fratricidal; she could not face without trembling the rupture of an alliance in which her mother, whom she still mourned, had accustomed her to see the safeguard of the peace of the world, the surest guarantee of the happiness of the people, and the support of her holy religion. Its dissolution would have destroyed forever her happiness and tranquillity. She distrusted Vergennes, nor was she wrong. The sympathies of Vergennes were with Prussia, to the point of writing this phrase, whose realization in this century has produced the sad results which we know, "If it be necessary to choose between the branches of the House of Bourbon in Italy and that of the Prussian power in Germany, we cannot hesitate in abandoning the former and maintaining the latter."

The queen remarked that the language of the king when she saw him alone, and before any one else, always differed from that which he used after a conference with his minister. Might she not conclude that at bottom her husband's opinion was the same as her own, and that it was Vergennes who influenced him? And if she deceived herself in this opinion, was his apparent duplicity likely to enlighten her? Consequently she determined not to see the king and his minister in each other's presence, and she increased her efforts to arrive at a solution of the difficulties; she was in haste to put an end to them, and to prevent any outbreak; she urged the king, the ministers, as well as the emperor, not to raise new impediments and pretensions. But whatever may have been her confidence — we might say, her illusion — with regard to the disinterestedness of her brother, she never lost sight of the superior interests of the country over which she reigned. And one day when the ambassador from Sweden, during a private audience, led the conversation to the grave question of Holland, which was then absorbing the attention of all courts, the queen, after having expressed herself frankly on the subject in the intimacy of a private conversation, added warmly, "Moreover, you may be very sure that I shall never interfere in any way, so soon as a course has been adopted, and that under all circumstances I shall never forget, despite my friendship for the emperor, that I am queen of France and mother of the dauphin." And despite her lack of sympathy for Vergennes, she twice refused to receive the Duc de Choiseul and his sister, the Duchesse de Gramont, who were impla-

cable enemies of the minister. On the other hand, she besought Joseph II. to put the king in a position to be able to induce the Hollanders to make the reparation which they owed him, by reassuring them with regard to his intention of conquest and aggrandizement; and even when she urged her brother to use firm language, it was only in order to arrive more quickly at a solution, such was her haste to dispel that phantom of war which haunted her.

By means of negotiations, exchange of letters and despatches, they finally succeeded in formulating the following propositions:

"The emperor should renounce the opening of the Scheldt; the Hollanders should offer a verbal reparation for the insult to the Austrian flag, and should cede Maestricht, but this place being considered by them as a necessary bulwark against Germany, the emperor should immediately cede it back to them for a pecuniary indemnity."

The States-General accepted; they consented to make an apology, and immediately sent two deputies, the Count of Wassenaer and the Baron of Leyden, to Vienna to make it; but with their commercial instincts, they haggled over the price they were to pay. Joseph II. demanded nine million five hundred thousand florins; the Republic wished to give only five millions. The affair dragged along. The arrangement, which was fixed for the 1st, then for the 15th of March, was put off until the 15th of September; bitterness was engendered; the emperor grew impatient at the successive delays; the queen even more so, — less, she said, from resentment than from a desire to arrive as quickly as possible at a good solution, and to avoid a war.

It was necessary to come to some conclusion. France assumed that part of the debt which the States-General would not pay, but at the same time assured herself, an historian has said, of advantages greatly outweighing the sacrifice; and the preliminaries of the peace were finally signed on Sept. 20, 1785, and were followed six months later by a treaty between France and Holland. Such generosity was clever, and wise men thought that they had not paid too dearly for the preservation of European peace, and for the maintenance of two alliances, one of which guaranteed them for a long time from a continental war, and the other of which had so recently rendered important services during the naval war with England.

But the public, which is always short-sighted in matters of

policy, censured what seemed to them a prodigality. They held Marie Antoinette responsible for it, and asserted that she had sent to her brother millions from France, — an unworthy lie, which is refuted by a simple investigation of the facts, and which Joseph II. himself took care to deny, when he said on his death-bed, "I am aware that the enemies of my sister Antoinette have accused her of having sent me considerable sums. I declare, on the point of appearing before God, that this is an abominable calumny."

Though not a political affair like the foregoing, another affair at this time absorbed all minds in France, which, while seemingly of a purely literary character, yet assumed the proportions of a great political question, and caused more ink to be spilled, more remarks to be circulated, more diplomacy to be used, and more intrigues to be concerted, than if a treaty between two powers had been in question. There were, in truth, two powers in opposition, — the ancient power of the monarchy, the newer power of public opinion. Should the new comedy of Beaumarchais, "The Marriage of Figaro," be played? Such was the problem which occupied the salons and the academies. The piece had been accepted at the Théâtre Français at the end of 1781; but the censorship had prohibited its representation, and at the beginning of 1784 the representation had not yet taken place. The king had commanded Madame Campan to read the manuscript to him, in the queen's presence; he had been profoundly disgusted with the libertine tone which prevailed, and at the attacks without number which the piece contained on the administration and institutions of the country, and against the majority of received ideas, which formed the basis of the then national order. His good sense understood the peril of such insinuations, emphasized and annotated by the factious spirit of the epoch. At the tirade against State prisons he rose brusquely. "It is detestable," he cried, "and shall never be played. The Bastille would first have to be destroyed if the piece were to be free from dangerous consequences. The man mocks at everything one should respect in a government." "The piece shall not be played?" the queen asked. "No, certainly not," replied Louis XVI.; "you may depend upon it." But Beaumarchais had said, "The piece shall be played;" and it was Beaumarchais who won the day. He had the king and keeper of the seals against him, but he had the public and a part of the court with him. A dexterous and experienced intriguer, he had

awakened public opinion by underhand means, by tiny rumours adroitly spread, thanks to the complicity of some and the stupidity or vanity of others, and excited curiosity. Every one wished to know the work at which the ministers took umbrage; and if the representation were prohibited, it was not forbidden to read it. Beaumarchais, while appearing to withdraw, like Virgil's nymph, and to refuse out of consideration for the will of the king, was enchanted to yield to wishes so vehemently expressed; he himself read it, and every one sought to obtain the favour of listening to him, either in his own house or in the most brilliant salons. Neither bishops nor archbishops disdained to appear among the audience; each day, Madame Campan relates, we heard, "I was present, or I am to be present, at a reading of Beaumarchais's piece." Being a man who neglected no detail, the author had prepared for these sessions an elegant manuscript bound with pink favours, on which was written, in large characters, "A Comic Tract." "A singular title," Monsieur de Loménie has justly remarked, "for a voluminous comedy in five acts, which was a sort of bloodhound used to hunt down the old régime." But every one was delighted. The great nobles were the first to applaud the satire on their manners, — the engine of war directed not only against their privileges, but against their legitimate influence. "Only petty minds fear petty writings," Figaro remarks in the piece. No one wished to pass for a petty mind. The Baron de Breteuil, the Comte de Vaudreuil, Madame de Polignac, were among the partisans of Beaumarchais. The Princesse de Lamballe sent the Duc de Fronsac to him to request the favour of a reading at her house, and the clever comedian only consented after much solicitation. When the Comte and Comtesse du Nord came to France, they wished to hear "The Marriage of Figaro." "The piece interests us greatly," the Baroness von Oberkirche said. Encouraged by all this approbation, Beaumarchais wrote to the lieutenant of police to demand again the authorization of his work, asserting that he had made great changes in it. The lieutenant of police, or rather the keeper of the seals, turned a deaf ear; but in June, 1783, the solicitations became more pressing, and permission was granted. The actors of the Comédie Française received orders to study the piece; and the first gentleman of the bedchamber authorized Monsieur de la Ferté to lend the Hôtel des Menus-Plaisirs for the representation. Tickets were distributed to all the court; carriages already

thronged the entrance of the theatre; the hall was half filled; at the last moment the representation was forbidden by a *lettre de cachet.* One can imagine the excitement. "This prohibition of the king," Madame Campan said, "seemed like an attack upon public liberty. So many disappointed hopes excited the discontent to such a point that the words 'oppression' and 'tyranny' were never pronounced with more vehemence, even during the days which preceded the fall of the throne."

Louis XVI. imagined that he was acting vigorously; he did not maintain it, and it was but an act of weakness. He himself was mistrustful of his steadfastness. "You will see," he said, one day, "that Monsieur Beaumarchais will be more powerful than the keeper of the seals." A singular sign of the time, and a more singular sign of character, this saying of a sovereign who held his own authority and that of his ministers so cheap. Moreover, he was not mistaken; three months after this interdiction, the piece was given, not yet in public, but before a part of the court, and in the presence of the king's brother. It was Monsieur de Vaudreuil who, wishing to give a novel and piquant entertainment at his house at Gennevilliers, had undertaken to obtain the revocation of the prohibition. How did he obtain it? We do not know; only one thing is certain, and that was the vehemence of the desire of that frivolous society. "Without 'The Marriage of Figaro' there is no safety," Vaudreuil wrote to the Duc de Fronsac, and the latter despatched a courier with all speed to Beaumarchais, who was then in England, in order to satisfy the impatience of his friend, "of the ladies," and of the Comte d'Artois.

The breach was made. "The presence of Monseigneur le Comte d'Artois and the real merit of your charming piece finally destroyed every obstacle that had retarded its representation, and consequently its success," Monsieur de Vaudreuil wrote to the author. There was no longer question of anything but to find an excuse for the production of the piece. The excuse was found. The king, assailed by solicitations, replied that there were still things which must not remain in the work; that new censors must be nominated; and that the author would the more readily make the excisions, as the piece was long. This was to capitulate. The new censors did not deceive themselves; they demanded certain unimportant modifications; and on April 27, 1784, "The Marriage of Figaro" was played at the Théâtre

Français. Louis XVI. thought that it would fail; convinced that the cuts which had been exacted would destroy all the interest, and detract from the spiciness of the piece, he demanded of Monsieur de Montesquiou, "Well, what do you think of the success?" "Sire, I hope that the piece will fail." "And I too," the king replied. "Yes," Sophie Arnould said, "it is a piece to fail fifty times running."

We know which was right, Louis XVI. or Madame Arnould. "There is only one thing more ridiculous than my piece," Beaumarchais himself said, "and that is its success." Who does not know the picture of that first night? All Paris thronged to the entrances of the theatre; the blue ribbons were lost in the crowd, and rubbed elbows with the Savoyards; the guards were dispersed, the doors forced, the iron *grilles* broken, by the efforts of the mob; the audience-hall was crowded; Monsieur himself was there with full equipage; the parterre and the boxes, aggressive or frivolous, greeted with noisy acclamations all those witty and cynical tirades, audaciously aimed against the established order of things; and at the back of a grated box, three men, whose names personify three of the powers of that time, literature, Parliament, and government, — Beaumarchais, the Abbé Sabattier, the Abbé de Calonne, — assembled after a gay dinner to enjoy together the success which had been so long expected, or rather to assist gayly at that tumult which was but the prelude and image of the assault directed against the monarchy.

What part had the queen taken in this affair? It is difficult to know exactly. Madame Campan asserts that she showed her displeasure against all the persons who had aided the author of "The Marriage of Figaro" to surprise the king's consent to the production of his comedy. On the other hand, the latest historian of Beaumarchais, Monsieur de Loménie, quotes a letter from the Duc de Fronsac to Papillon de la Ferté, which contains this phrase, "The queen said to me that the king had consented to allow 'The Marriage of Figaro' to be played at Gennevilliers." Was Marie Antoinette simply charged to repeat the king's word to Messieurs de Fronsac and de Vaudreuil? Had she been her brother-in-law's and her friend's advocate with her husband? Monsieur de Loménie inclines toward the latter hypothesis, and therefore contradicts Madame Campan. It seems to us that the two opinions are not entirely irreconcilable. It may be, although it is by no means proved, that yielding to the importunities of

her set, the queen aided Monsieur de Vaudreuil to obtain from Louis XVI. the permission which he solicited. But it is highly probable also that she believed, as Madame Campan affirms, that Beaumarchais had made great changes in his work, as he boasted in his letter to the lieutenant of police; that it was with this idea, and to recompense the sacrifices which the author had made, that she supported the request which Monsieur de Vaudreuil made on that very pretext, and that afterward, being disillusioned as to the excisions which had been made, she had not concealed her anger against those who had thus lent themselves to deceive her and to deceive the king. What is certain, in any case, is that she was not present at the representation at Gennevilliers, and that she did not again appear in any way in the negotiations which followed to obtain permission for a public representation, for which Louis XVI., as we have said, exacted the examination of two new censors.

But the queen was a woman; she was impulsive; she soon, even too soon, forgot offences. The king, in a moment of anger, provoked, it is said, by a complaint of Monsieur, had sent Beaumarchais, not to the Bastille, but what was more humiliating, to St. Lazare. The queen, as well as the public, and the king himself when he was calmer, saw an injustice therein. She wished to repair it delicately; she undertook herself to play in her little theatre at Trianon, not "The Marriage of Figaro," but "The Barber of Seville," and invited the author to be present, which was an unusual distinction. The rehearsals were held under the direction of Dazincourt, who had just made a brilliant success in "The Marriage of Figaro." The performance took place on Aug. 19, 1785. The queen played Rosine; she loved those rôles of a young woman who was half naïve, half cunning, innocent and coquettish at the same time. The Comtè d'Artois played Figaro; Monsieur de Vaudreuil, Almaviva; the Duc de Guiche, Bartholo; the Bailiff of Crussol, Basile. It was given very privately; according to Grimm, it was a success. The small number of spectators admitted to the representation, he wrote, were agreed that the *ensemble* was such as one rarely sees in pieces played by amateur actors. "One remarked especially that the queen displayed, in the scene of the fourth act, an amount of grace and truthfulness which could not have failed to call forth transports of applause, even for the most obscure actress. We have these details," he added, "from a severe and delicate judge, whom no court prejudice has ever blinded in any way."

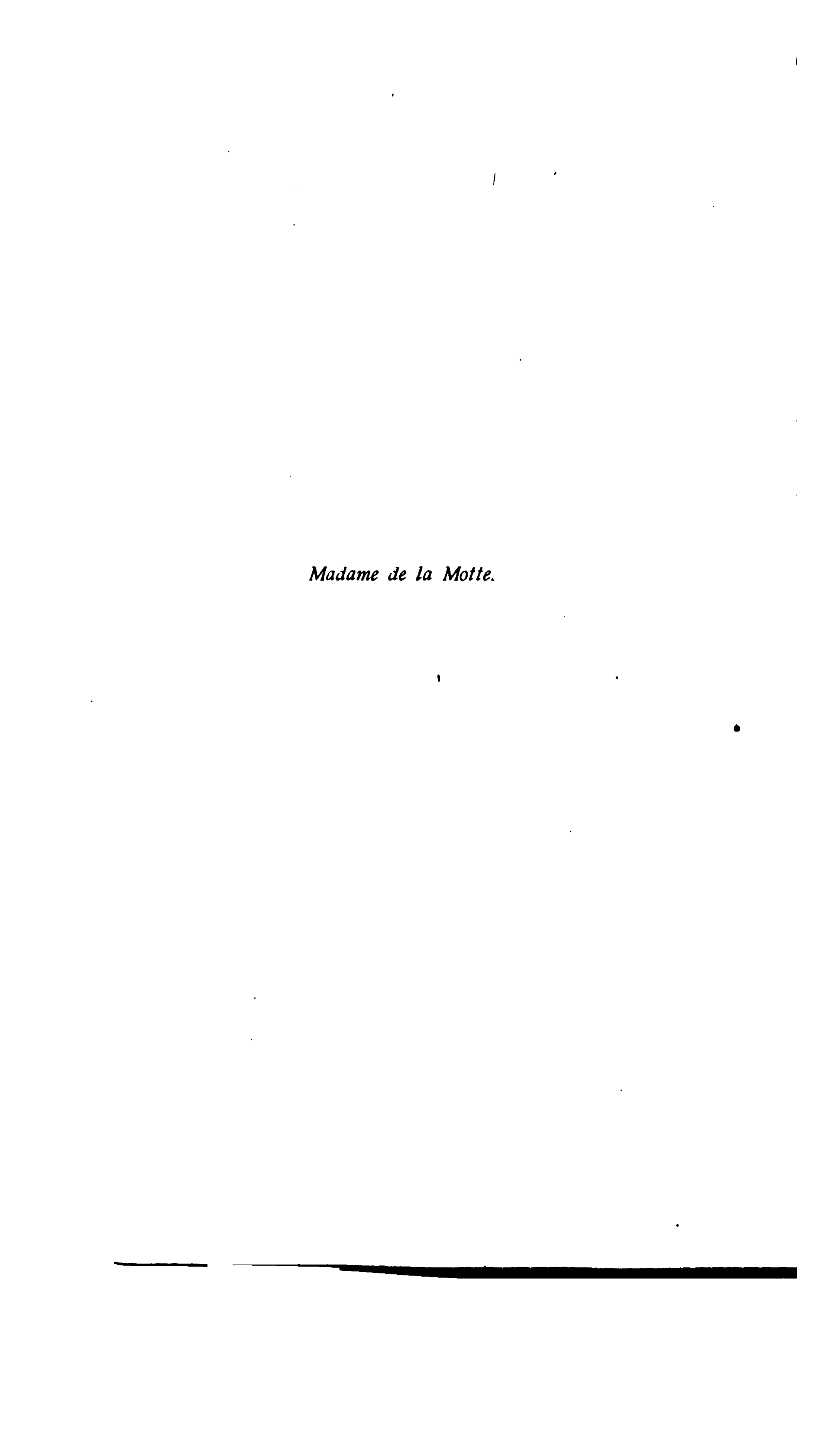
It was a triumph for the artist, an imprudence for the sovereign. However small the number of the spectators, the rumour of such a representation soon spread beyond the narrow circle wherein it should have been confined. And it must have seemed strange that a prince of the blood should hurl — no matter with what talent — from the private stage of the queen those vehement ironies of Figaro, which were only, under a gayer form, the eternal and endless protest of all that is little against all that is great. Was this but a heedless fancy on Marie Antoinette's part, — a thirst of pleasure, the vanity of an artist, or the simple wilfulness of a woman?

We believe that there was something more and better than this. Perhaps that enterprise, born in a thought of kindness and of reparation — such was the opinion of Grimm — for an author who had been injuriously treated, and seconded by the attraction of a favourite amusement, may have been carried to the end by a delicate sentiment of respect for herself. Perhaps the queen feared that if she gave up a plan which had already been prepared and announced, she would seem to be more touched than was compatible with her honour and dignity by the serious occurrence which had thrown Paris into excitement, and which popular malice was ready to use against her. Four days before, indeed, a thunderbolt had fallen from the sky of Versailles, where for some time so many clouds had been gathering.

They were in the midst of the lawsuit over the necklace.







Madame de la Motte.

CHAPTER XX.

Lawsuit of the Necklace.

AN intriguing woman, a forger, and a dupe, — such were the principal authors, such, in three words, is the summary of the strange drama, or rather of the immense swindle, which bears in history the name of the lawsuit of the necklace.

The intriguing woman was the Comtesse de la Motte-Valois; the forger, Retaux de Villette; the dupe, Prince Louis de Rohan, archbishop of Strasburg, grand almoner of France and cardinal; the true victim, the queen. It was not the first time that rogues had abused the name of Marie Antoinette. In 1777 the wife of a treasurer of France, named Cahouet de Villiers, who had been formerly mixed up in the intrigues which had brought Madame du Barry to court, had set the example, and, in a manner, marked out the way for Madame de la Motte. Intimately connected with an intendant of the queen's finances, Monsieur de Saint-Charles, she had succeeded through his aid in procuring a register with Marie Antoinette's arms, and some royal orders, signed in advance; then by cleverly counterfeiting the royal handwriting, she had forged false letters, wherein the young princess in the most familiar and affectionate style had begged her to make the acquisition of various objects for her. These notes and the register, shown with a certain mystery, intimations dexterously insinuated of pretended audiences obtained at Versailles, had accredited the opinion that Madame de Villiers verily enjoyed the august confidence. Then pushing her audacity further, she forged new letters, wherein the queen charged her to procure relatively large sums, of which, she said, she stood in pressing need, and which she dared not demand from the king. Duped by this supposed credit, and anxious to oblige their sovereign, the treasurer of the Duc d'Orléans, Berenger, and a banker named De Lafosse gave to the woman, the first one hundred thousand écus, the second one hundred thousand francs.

But Berenger had his doubts; he communicated them to Monsieur de Sartines. The fraud was discovered, and Madame de Villiers was arrested. Mercy wished that information of this shady transaction should be sent to an ordinary justice. "Everything that touches the glory of the queen," he said, "should be set forth in the clearest light." But the Comte de Maurepas was opposed to a public trial. Was he afraid of the extent of the scandal? Did he fear, as some persons insinuated, that his nephew, D'Aiguillon, was implicated in the affair? However that may be, a special commission was called for the trial. Monsieur de Villiers, though not personally held responsible, was condemned to repay the stolen sums, and was ruined by the restitution; his wife was imprisoned at St. Pelagie, and the affair, after having created a little noise, was soon forgotten. But however bold that enterprise may have been, what was the miserable theft of four hundred thousand francs by the side of the gigantic undertaking planned and executed by Madame de la Motte?

Jeanne de Sainte-Rémy-Valois, Comtesse de la Motte, was descended from a baron of Sainte-Rémy, the natural son of Henri II. Her father, the last representative of this branch of royal origin and former proprietors of the important domains of Essoye, Fontette, and Vazelle, but whose family had for a long time been reduced to poverty, had finally lived by hunting and highway robbery, and had died in the hospital; her mother had followed a soldier. Left without resources, with a brother and sister younger than herself, Mademoiselle de Sainte-Rémy had first subsisted on public charity. The curé of her parish, moved with compassion for the sad remnants of a royal race, had recommended them to the bishop of Langres, Monseigneur de la Luzerne, and to the Marquise de Boulainvilliers, the wife of the provost of Paris, who lived in the suburbs of Fontette. The prelate and the great lady took an interest in the children, placed the son in an educational institution at Bar-sur-Seine, and the daughters in a school at Passy, where Madame de Boulainvilliers took them under her protection.

"Thus the last descendants of the Valois passed from an almost savage state to a civilized condition," wrote the Comte Beugnot, who had known them well.

Six years later Jeanne de Sainte-Rémy left the school at Passy, and was placed with a mistress to learn the trade of a dressmaker, with whom she remained three years.

Monseigneur de la Luzerne had sent the orphans' papers to Chérin. Chérin verified their genealogy, and acknowledged its authenticity; and on a certificate made out by him, the king granted to the son of the Baron de Valois a pension of eight hundred francs, and free admission to the navy, where he conducted himself well, and rose to the rank of lieutenant; to each of the girls was given a pension equal to that of their brother, for their subsistence, and at the end of two years, to be passed at the house of Madame de Boulainvilliers, a place in the abbey of Yerres, near Montgeron, then in the abbey of Longchamps. These gifts were made in the secret hope that the son would take vows in the order of Malta, and that the daughters, once in the convent, would never leave it.

But such was not Mademoiselle de Valois's intention; she had no taste for a religious life. One fine morning the two sisters escaped from Longchamps, and after an eventful journey landed at Bar-sur-Aube, in the inn of the Tête Rouge, with six francs in their pockets. A lady, Madame de Surmont, moved with pity, received them in her house, and put them for the moment beyond reach of want.

Jeanne de Sainte-Rémy, without being exactly beautiful, had that piquant grace which is often more attractive than beauty. Her figure was of medium height, but slender and well-formed; her mouth was large, but was furnished with good teeth; her eyes blue, hidden beneath black eyelashes; her hand well made; her foot very small; her complexion of remarkable whiteness; her smile enchanting. With no education, but of a lively and penetrating mind, of a bold and enterprising character, affecting at need timidity and gentleness, but resolute in pursuing her end, without principles to bother her, she was tenacious of pleasing, and she pleased. A nephew of Madame de Surmont, the Comte de la Motte, who was serving in the *gendarmerie*, was then on his vacation with his family; at the end of a few months, on June 6, 1780, a forced marriage made him the husband of a descendant of Henri II. He brought to his wife a fine name, an expression of face which was exceedingly amiable, despite his ugliness, many debts, and few scruples, great dexterity in bodily exercise, and a mind inclined to adventure.

It was necessary to live, and they only had a pension of eight hundred livres. Madame de Surmont had turned the young couple out of her house. A sister of Madame de la Motte, Madame de Latour,

to whose house they went during their first perplexity, "having herself somewhat less than was necessary to keep her, was not long able to maintain them." The husband rejoined his regiment at Lunéville and at Nancy. But poverty overtook them; they resolved to fall back upon Chérin's certificate, and the memory of the Valois. They had recourse to Madame de Boulainvilliers, who, ever kindly disposed toward her protégée, presented her in the month of September, 1781, to the grand almoner of France, Cardinal de Rohan, who was at that time at his château of Saverne.

This was the first step; but Madame de la Motte aimed at more. In the month of November of the same year Monsieur de la Motte handed in his resignation, and the two set out for Paris, — that great refuge for all plotters and *déclassés*. Misfortune there pursued them; they had scarcely arrived before their protectress, Madame de Boulainvilliers, died of small-pox. Madame de la Motte, however, was not discouraged; she and her husband installed themselves in a miserable lodging-house in the Rue de la Verrerie, — the Hôtel de Rheims, — where they lived by expedients, and suffered many privations. She multiplied her efforts: she obtained for Monsieur de la Motte a place as supernumerary in the Light Guards of Monsieur d'Artois, had an audience with the Maréchal de Richelieu, betook herself to Versailles, and there engaged a furnished room; she penetrated even to the waiting-room of Madame, where she feigned to fall in a faint, and received from the princess, who was moved with pity, a few louis; she appealed to every one, — to Monsieur d'Ormesson, to Monsieur de Calonne, to the Duchesse d'Orléans, — and obtained a few small sums, alms rather than presents; she failed with the Comtesse d'Artois, but, despite her failures, still dreamed of even reaching the queen; in the mean while she went to Luciennes, to solicit from Madame du Barry a position as companion, or at least that she should hand a petition to the king; then finally, overwhelmed with debts, and receiving but vague promises or meagre succour, not knowing to what saint to pray, she turned to the nobleman to whom her protectress had recommended her, and in the month of June, 1782, requested an audience of the Cardinal de Rohan. She saw him, pleased him, moved him by the picture she drew of her misery, returned to see him. With her keen and penetrating mind, she soon took his measure, and feeling that she had found in that vain, prodigal, and libertine prelate a mine which was as abun-

dant as it was easy, attached herself to him, and did not leave him again.

Louis René Édouard, Prince and Cardinal de Rohan, grand almoner of France, was then only coadjutor of his uncle, the bishop of Strasburg, and was known under the name of Prince Louis. He had been nominated in 1771 ambassador to Vienna, thanks to the influence of two members of his powerful house, — the Comtesse de Marsan and the Prince de Soubise. A sufficiently bad reputation had preceded him, and Maria Theresa was tempted for a moment to refuse to receive "that wicked fellow," "who was more of a soldier than a coadjutor," as the queen said. Light-minded, inconstant, of a character inclined to intrigue, liberal and magnificent even to prodigality, without judgment or principle, but with a noble mien, the attractive exterior of a man of the world, and the fine manners of a man of race, the Prince de Rohan was at the same time the idol of women, and a subject of scandal for serious people. His conduct in Austria did not belie the opinion which had been formed of him. He sought at first to conciliate the good graces of the empress by affecting an almost puritanical reserve; but the constraint which he imposed upon himself did not last, and at the end of two months Maria Theresa wrote, —

"I cannot give my approbation to the ambassador, Rohan; he is a big volume, stuffed full of evil remarks, ill suited to his position as ecclesiastic and minister, which he scatters abroad impudently on every occasion; without knowledge of affairs or sufficient understanding; with a fund of levity, presumption, and inconsequence. One cannot rely either upon his explanations or his reports. The majority of his following is the same, without merit and without manners. I do not say this to you with the intent of having you demand his recall, but if his court should recall him of its own accord, I should be very well content."

During two years there were the same complaints against "this wicked fantastic, full of extravagances and folly," who respected nothing, not even his holy calling, and who himself cynically spoke of his priesthood. The behaviour of the persons connected with the embassy was not more orderly than that of the ambassador; valets and master were in accord.

While the former maltreated the secretaries of the court, knocked the sentinels of the palace beneath their horses' hoofs, struck the peasants of the surrounding country with their whips, got beaten in their turn, and by their perpetual provocations

aroused all the old national prejudices against the French, the latter used his privileges as ambassador to carry on smuggling, which did not prevent his being overwhelmed with debts, notwithstanding his great fortune and rich abbeys, traversed in a hunting-costume a Corpus Christi procession, braved opinion, set the empress at defiance, forged letters from Maria Theresa, flooded the court of Versailles, the salons of Paris, even those of Vienna, with wicked and scandalous stories against the mother and daughter, and succeeded in exciting the ill-humour of the emperor against the dauphiness. His secretary, the Abbé Georgel, a former Jesuit, a designing and vindictive man, aided him well in his work of propagating calumny and forging letters.

Things came to such a pass that Maria Theresa feared the rancour of Prince Louis for her daughter; and the ardour with which she desired his departure even left her indifferent as to who his successor might be. On the other hand, society in Vienna did not conceal its sympathy for a personage whose large expenditures, lavish hospitality, and gallant manners dazzled them. All the women, young or old, beautiful or ugly, were infatuated with him. Joseph II. himself, although he despised him, found his "gossip and conundrums" amusing; and Kaunitz, more solicitous for the interests of politics than of morals, was very well content with a minister whose levity "did not disturb him."

The assertion has been made that the Prince de Rohan was a victim to Austria's resentment, and was sacrificed by Marie Antoinette because he had discovered the imperial policy. The reply to this assertion of certain historians is to be found in this phrase of Maria Theresa: "The ambassador Rohan is always the same: the emperor and Kaunitz like him well enough; the one amuses himself by making him talk nonsense, the other is content with his lack of capacity." The truth is that the future hero of the lawsuit over the queen's necklace was no better diplomat than he was an orderly prelate, and that Marie Antoinette, in manifesting toward him under all circumstances an invincible antipathy, was not paying off old family grudges, but was only yielding to the natural repugnance of an upright mind for a priest so little worthy of his calling. The Duc d'Aiguillon himself valued his agent at his proper worth; and if Prince Louis kept a post which he filled so badly, it was owing to the same causes which had placed him there, — to family influence, and to

the intrigues of the Prince de Soubise and of the Comtesse de Marsan.

His favour diminished on the accession of Louis XVI.; and one of the first acts of the new sovereign was to recall the ambassador who, the queen said, "dishonoured France more than he scandalized Austria." The ladies of Vienna were in despair, and only consoled themselves by wearing the picture of their favourite mounted in a ring.

Joseph II. and Kaunitz had their reasons for regret. Certain steps were taken at Versailles with the view of obtaining for him a continuance in the office of ambassador, or at least some decisive mark of favour. The king was inflexible: he refused to receive the Prince de Rohan; the queen would not speak to him. A pension of fifty thousand livres to pay his debts, until he should come into possession of his bishopric of Strasburg, was the only indemnity he received for his disgrace. But the Rohans were not discouraged; their ambition, ever on the alert for the advancement of him on whom, they thought, rested the best chances for their house, lost no means of influence. The Prince de Soubise, the Princesse de Guéménée, her daughter, then high in favour with the queen, especially the Comtesse de Marsan, who was the soul of all these intrigues, and who, despite the diminution of her favour, always preserved in the eyes of Louis XVI. the prestige of her former office as governess to the Children of France, united their efforts, either in France or abroad, to heap upon the head of Prince Louis every dignity and honour.

Success crowned so much perseverance; the king of Poland, "a worthy protector of such a protégé," as Maria Theresa said, obtained, in default of the king of France, who refused to make the demand, a cardinal's hat for the coadjutor of Strasburg. The Sorbonne made him its head-master on Jan. 31, 1782, although he was not, to use the language of that time, "of the house," and was accused of many scandals in his youth, and of being scarcely orthodox in his doctrine; and Louis XVI. himself, tormented by his former governess, bound, moreover, by a written promise of his grandfather, was persuaded in a moment of weakness to assure the reversion of the office of grand almoner to the prince.

The queen had striven in vain with her husband to annul or defeat the effect of this imprudent promise; in vain she had

made him give her his word that the coadjutor of Strasburg should never be grand almoner of France. On the day following the death of the titulary of that post, the Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon and the Comtesse de Marsan, warned by Maurepas, went to the king on his awakening, and despite his evasions and reluctance wrung from him the nomination of Prince Louis to the office which had been vacant but a few hours, with this illusory condition, that he should hand in his resignation at the end of a year. This was the compromise which the feeble Louis XVI. conceived in order to keep his promise to the Rohans without breaking his word to the queen.

The desires of the ambitious governess were satisfied: her favourite was grand almoner, a member of the Académie Française, head-master of the Sorbonne, superior-general of the Hospital of Eighty, commander of the order of the St. Esprit, while waiting to be bishop of Strasburg, abbé of St. Waast, of La Chaise Dieu, of Marmoutiers, the possessor of eight hundred thousand livres of income from his benefices; if it were only possible, this would indeed crown her dreams, — to make him prime minister!

"I look upon it as a very great misfortune that the Prince de Rohan should occupy the position of grand almoner," Mercy said; "his audacity and intriguing may become very dangerous to the queen." And Maria Theresa on her part wrote to her daughter, —

"The place that Rohan is to occupy distresses me; he is a cruel enemy, as much on your account as because of his own principles, which are most perverse. Under an affable, easy, courteous behaviour, he did much harm at Vienna; and I must see him by the side of the king and of you. He will scarce be an honour to his station as bishop."

The forebodings of Mercy and Maria Theresa were not mistaken; but it was less the audacity of the prince than his vanity that became dangerous. The cardinal, treated by Marie Antoinette with marked coldness, received with ill favour when he went to make the customary acknowledgments, irritated, humiliated, wounded in his *amour-propre* as a great noble, his ambition as a courtier alarmed, — for he felt that the queen's credit was daily waxing greater, and that to have her for an enemy was to condemn himself to impotence, — the cardinal, while his friends did not cease their campaign of secret machinations, of spiteful re-

marks, of anonymous attacks, himself made every possible effort, wrote letter upon letter, to gain the good-will of, and procure a favourable reception from, the young sovereign. He only succeeded in being importunate without inducing her to change her mind with regard to him.

The futility of his endeavours did not discourage him; and his blind desire, irritated by failure, made him capable of every extravagance. If we may believe Madame Campan, he had already allowed himself to be duped by a woman named Goupil, — a consummate *intrigante*, who had escaped from Salpêtrière, and who had made him believe that she could reconcile him and the queen. Later, when Marie Antoinette gave a supper and entertainment to the Comte and Comtesse du Nord at Trianon, the cardinal had the presumptuous fancy to introduce himself into the garden. Not daring to ask permission of the queen, who would have refused it, he persuaded the *concierge* to allow him to enter, by promising him to remain in his lodge; but he did not keep his promise, and twice placed himself in the way of the royal family, when, despite the redingote which he had donned to disguise himself, his red stockings betrayed him. The queen, indignant at the audacity of the prelate and the compliance of the *concierge*, had, on the following day, dismissed the latter; and the pressing solicitations of Madame Campan, who was touched by the distress of a father of a family, had been necessary to reinstate the faithless servant in his position. But if the sovereign consented to pardon the suborned, she neglected no occasion to manifest her indignation and contempt for the suborner. She was not only inflexible, she was inaccessible. Despite the exertions of his family, despite his own efforts, the unfortunate cardinal could not obtain a word or a look from her. All the memorials of the time, and the documents of the trial, attest this; never, we believe, was an historical fact better established than the profound, deliberate, and persistent antipathy of Marie Antoinette for the Prince de Rohan, and at the same time, the immoderate desire of the latter to overcome a coldness so prejudicial to his ambition, so mortifying to his vanity.

Things were at this pass, and the cardinal was still sore after his recent escapade at Trianon, when on June 24, 1782, he entered into relations with Madame de la Motte. How important was the aid granted by the grand almoner to the descendant of the Valois? Was it limited to a few louis, granted from time

to time, as the cardinal asserted, or did it reach the considerable sum of eighty thousand livres, as Madame de la Motte affirmed?

Despite the mystery which surrounds this point, the situation of the La Mottes, which was so long precarious, their expedients, — such as pawning their effects, the sale of their pension, loans, etc., that very mixture of outward magnificence and real distress which is the luxury and sign of the needy, — would seem to confirm the cardinal's assertion. But at the same time it appears not less certain that during two years the interviews of Madame de la Motte with the bishop of Strasburg were tolerably frequent, — more frequent than the prince was willing later to acknowledge. Touched by the unfortunate situation of the woman, charmed by her wit, captivated by her grace, ensnared by her cleverness, he was not long in submitting to her charm, and showing it. As early as 1783 he became her surety for a sum of five thousand five hundred livres, borrowed from a Jew of Nancy; he recommended her to the comptroller-general, gave her advice on the composition of the memorials which she presented to the king and to the ministers, received her at Strasburg, listened to her confidences, and probably made her his own.

At the end of two years, the interest which the grand almoner took in Madame de la Motte, and his confidence in her, were sufficiently established for her to dare, one fine day, to tell him the following story: —

She had finally reached, or at least very nearly reached, her aim. Thanks to favour from a high quarter, the estates, the fortune, and the rank of her family were about to be restored to her; and the protectress who patronized her was no other than the queen. This princess, touched by the undeserved distress of the granddaughter of Henri II., could not suffer one of the Valois to be reduced to so precarious a position. She would support the last of the race; she would do more, she would honour them with her friendship, and grant them her confidence, and did not disdain, in the secret interviews which she had with Madame de la Motte, to charge her with the most delicate commissions.

Nothing was true in this recital; and eighteen months later, Marie Antoinette could affirm openly that this low adventuress had never had any position at Versailles, nor access to her. Madame de la Motte herself, in her examination of Jan. 20, 1786, was constrained to avow that *she had never had occasion or pre-*

text to speak to the queen. Once only, on Feb. 2, 1783, she had presented a petition to her; Marie Antoinette had passed on without paying any attention to the petitioner, and had preserved no memory of the person. Alone of the royal family, Madame for an instant had interested herself in the granddaughter of the Valois, and had had her pension of eight hundred livres increased to fifteen hundred. But at this point the relations of Madame de la Motte with Versailles had ceased. The cardinal could not have been ignorant of this; and although he averred that his disgrace placed him beyond the power of knowing these details, the influence of the Rohans was sufficiently great, and their relations with the court sufficiently frequent, for him to have been able to verify the facts if he had desired. But he does not seem to have thought of it seriously. Fascinated by Madame de la Motte, he believed all she told him. To accomplish his captivation, she showed him, with every appearance of mystery, which redoubled the importance of the communication, some letters which she pretended had been written by the queen; she committed forgery to accredit her lies. These letters contained words of kindness addressed to her, some familiar and affectionate expressions, — "My dear countess," "my dear heart." The cardinal might have verified the handwriting; he did not take the trouble to do so.

From a petitioner, the clever woman posed as his protectress; grateful for Monsieur de Rohan's kindness, she was ready to employ for his benefit the favour which the kindness of Marie Antoinette assured to her. Still more, she had already begun; and the way in which her first overtures had been received, gave her reason to cherish very great hopes of ultimate success. She had nothing to do but to finish a work so well under way, and she could not fail.

We easily believe what we desire. The cardinal was delighted. To regain the good-will of the queen was his dearest dream. How could he doubt the word of a woman who was ready to render him such a service, — of a woman, moreover, it must be said, to whom he had never done anything but good? As a consummate plotter, Madame de la Motte took care to keep the credulous prelate ever on the alert. "The prejudices of the queen were little by little being overcome; her severity was diminishing; she would even consent to have Monsieur de Rohan lay his justification before her in writing." The cardinal

immediately hastened to draw up a memorial, wherein he stated everything that was likely to dissipate the displeasure of his sovereign. The memorial was confided to Madame de la Motte; and a few days after, the adventuress brought a pretended reply from the queen, thus worded: "I have read your letter; I am charmed to find you no longer culpable. I cannot yet grant you the audience you desire. When circumstances permit, I shall let you know. Be discreet."

The cardinal was in transports; he sent a few lines in reply to this note, wherein he lost himself in thanks. And from this there was established between him and Marie Antoinette, by the intermediation of the countess, a supposed correspondence, which completed the deception of the unfortunate prelate, — a correspondence filled, on the part of the cardinal, with exaggerated gratitude, of which nothing can give any idea, and at the same time with the most incredible dreams of ambition; while the letters of the queen expressed sentiments of interest and of confidence. These pretended letters, written on small blue paper, with gilt edges and vignettes, were simply fabricated under the direction of Madame de la Motte by a friend of her husband, who had soon become hers, and even something more, under the name of her secretary, — Retaux de Villette, a former *gendarme*, burdened with debts, accustomed to live by expedients, like the De la Mottes, and like them not very delicate as to the choice of expedients; of a quick and insinuating mind; a good fellow, moreover, who had a certain smattering of art and literature, and who threw himself with sufficient thoughtlessness into this affair; for he did not even take care to disguise his own handwriting, or to imitate that of the queen. But the cardinal did not examine too closely. Absorbed by his hopes, he saw nothing.

Only one thing was lacking. The cardinal desired to have a verbal assurance of that pardon which had been given to him by letter; he was eager to receive it from the mouth of his sovereign. When would that audience which had been promised him take place? Madame de la Motte, embarrassed, hesitated, deferred, evaded; but the prelate became pressing, and the countess, pushed to extremities, at length announced that the queen consented to see the grand almoner. However, as it was not fitting for her to give a conspicuous sign of her change of conduct, which could not fail to create a good deal of talk at court, she would speak to him, not in public, but in the evening

in the gardens of Versailles. The blinded prelate believed all; a celebrated charlatan, who was one of his intimates, and in whom he had absolute confidence, — Cagliostro, — had predicted to him that this happy correspondence would place him at the pinnacle of his fortunes, and that his influence in the government would become preponderant. After this day, the cardinal, eager, anxious, so happy that he sometimes asked if he were not the puppet of a dream, with attentive ear, and eye ever on the alert, — the cardinal, dressed in a long blue coat and a large hat, walked in the park of the château, accompanied by one of the gentlemen of his household, the Baron de Planta, awaiting the blessed instant which should decide his fortune and crown his hopes.

One evening, the 24th of July, at eleven o'clock, Madame de la Motte came to him. "Quick!" she said; "the queen permits you to approach her!" He ran; he flew; he hastened his steps, although somewhat stealthily; he arrived in the avenue, near which was a hedge; he perceived a woman dressed in white, who held out a rose to him, and murmured these words, "You know what this means." Then suddenly a man appeared, "Here come Madame and Madame la Comtesse d'Artois," he said in a whisper. "Quick, quick!" Madame de la Motte cried. The woman quickly disappeared in the hedge; and the cardinal withdrew, convinced that he had seen the queen, and dreaming of the most brilliant destiny. The interview had lasted only a moment; but that moment had well recompensed all his trouble. What had really occurred? What was the meaning of the scene, and who was the woman?

During the first days of July, Monsieur de la Motte had met at the Palais Royal a young woman whose resemblance to the queen had struck him. This was a girl named Le Guay, a *fille du monde*, as one said then, — a "street-walker," as Marie Antoinette wrote somewhat later, known in the equivocal society in which she lived as Mademoiselle d'Oliva. La Motte had followed her to her domicile and struck up an acquaintance with her. Seven or eight days later he informed her that a lady of very great distinction wished to see her, and that he would fetch her that very evening. That evening, in fact, the lady in question, who was no other than Madame de la Motte, came in her turn. "My dear heart," she said to her, "you do not know me; but have confidence in what I am going to tell you. I am a lady attached to the court." And she added, "I am hand in glove with the

queen; she has placed great confidence in me, and has charged me to find her some one who will be disposed to do something for her when the time comes. I have cast my eyes on you. If you will consent, I will make you a present of fifteen thousand francs, and the queen's gift will be worth as much more." As proof in support of what she said, she exhibited the famous forged letter which had already seduced and conquered the Cardinal de Rohan. Surprised at a proposition of such a nature, but dazzled by the name of the queen, and the prospect of a protection of which she had never dreamed, Mademoiselle d'Oliva accepted. It was agreed that on the following day Monsieur de la Motte should call for her in a carriage and take her to Versailles. This was done; at the hour fixed, Monsieur de la Motte went in search of his new friend, in company with his colleague, Retaux de Villette, and the three set out for Versailles. Madame de la Motte had preceded them, with her waiting-woman. Rosalie Briffaut. They alighted in the Place Dauphine, at the Hôtel de la Belle Image, the habitual residence of the countess.

The two plotters feigned to go out for a moment; then they returned and announced to Mademoiselle d'Oliva that the queen was entirely satisfied, and was awaiting with impatience the following day.

"What shall I have to do then?" Mademoiselle d'Oliva asked.

"You shall know to-morrow," Madame de la Motte replied mysteriously.

The following day was in fact the day fixed for the scene which we have just described. When evening came, they proceeded to the toilet of the principal actress. Madame de la Motte did not disdain to preside over it in person. Aided by her waiting-woman, she attired Mademoiselle d'Oliva, who had become for the moment the Baronne d'Oliva, in a white chemise with a pink lining, threw over her shoulders a white mantle, dressed her hair with a *Thérèse*, then gave her a letter, and said, "I shall conduct you this evening to the park. A very great noble will approach you; you must give him this letter and this rose, and say to him, 'You know what this means.' This is all that you will have to do."

The affair passed as had been agreed upon, and as we have related. The great noble, it is superfluous to say, was no other than the Cardinal de Rohan. Agitated by the unexpected rôle she had to play, Mademoiselle d'Oliva forgot indeed to give him

the letter. But the cardinal did not need it; he had received the rose; he had heard from the mouth of her whom he took to be the queen the words which seemed to him the guarantee of his pardon. He was not only confident and credulous, he was blind. His gratitude to Madame de la Motte knew no bounds; his faith in her was not to be shaken.

"An ardent ambition," the Comte Beugnot has said, "was joined in him with a very tender affection. Each of these two sentiments exalted the other, and the unfortunate man was possessed by a sort of delirium. I have been able to read hastily some of the letters which he then wrote to Madame de la Motte. They were all fire. The shock, or rather the movement, of the two passions was frightful."

The time for work was over. Madame de la Motte had only to reap the reward of her labour, and she was not in a humour to wait long. At the end of August, a letter fabricated by Retaux asked the cardinal for the sum of sixty thousand livres, for some persons in whom the queen was interested. The prelate had no instant of doubt or hesitation. Every desire of the queen was a command for him. The Baron de Planta carried the sum named to Madame de la Motte, who, in this case as in all the others, was the intermediary between Monsieur de Rohan and Marie Antoinette. Of these sixty thousand francs, four thousand, instead of the fifteen thousand promised, were given to Mademoiselle d'Oliva, who continued to understand nothing of the part which she had been made to play, and who after a time was completely set aside; the rest went to meet the expenses of the household of the La Mottes.

Three months later, in November, came a new letter, like the preceding from the hands of Retaux, and a new request, not for sixty, but for a hundred thousand francs! As at first, the cardinal paid without counting. The hundred thousand francs were remitted by the Baron de Planta. As before, the sum passed to the account of the La Mottes, and went to appease their creditors or to support their prodigalities.

Their household was ordered on a magnificent scale. They hired three new domestics; they bought a carriage, horses, clocks, bracelets, diamonds, gems of all sorts, a magnificent service of plate. They no longer borrowed; they lent. And in order the better to emphasize their metamorphosis, Monsieur and Madame de la Motte betook themselves to Bar-sur-Aube in

great style; such was their hurry to reappear in all the magnificence of their fortune before the eyes of those who had formerly known them in their poverty. A van preceded them; two couriers announced them; a butler, with a grand air, ordered the most expensive provisions for their dinner. After these preparations, which excited the curiosity of the inhabitants of the village, the couple themselves made their entrance in an elegant berlin. A brother-in-law of Monsieur de la Motte, Monsieur de la Tour, whom an ill-concealed antipathy rendered more clear-sighted, alone suspected the truth, and qualified his brother-in-law as a fool and his sister-in-law as a rogue.

However, the rumour of the influence of Madame de la Motte spread on all sides: it was talked of at Paris; it was talked of at Versailles. She herself, by a clever reserve, by exhibition of the pretended royal letters, always written by Retaux on the famous blue paper with vignettes, carefully cultivated the report; and the great style which she maintained gave greater credence to what she said. It was the deceptive mirror which attracted the simple, the trap in which the fools were caught. The Cardinal de Rohan was not the only one who was taken in by this artifice; and the swindle of one hundred and sixty thousand francs, of which he had been the victim, was but child's play beside the unheard-of stroke which chance put into the hands of Madame de la Motte.

Two jewellers to the crown, Boehmer and Bassange, had set as a necklace a magnificent collection of diamonds, which had been gathered together at great expense and after long research. Astonished themselves at the price that this ornament reached, and despairing to sell it to any one except sovereigns, knowing, moreover, the taste which the queen on frequent occasions had manifested for gems, they got the first gentleman of the bedchamber to propose it to the king. Louis XVI., astonished at the beauty of the necklace, and passionately fond of his wife, who had just presented him with his first child, had contemplated offering this exquisite necklace as a present to her in her convalescence. He had carried the case to her. They were then in the midst of the American war. The queen looked at the gems, admired them, but refused to accept them. "We have greater need of a vessel than of this necklace," she replied simply.

Boehmer was in despair. To retain in his hands an object of such value, to tie up a capital of sixteen hundred thousand francs,— this was the price which the experts Doigny and Maillard had

estimated the necklace to be worth, — was ruin. He proposed the necklace to various sovereigns; all were frightened at the price. He returned to Marie Antoinette; she refused as before. Repulsed on all sides, the jeweller solicited an audience, and there, as though seized with delirium, he threw himself at the feet of the princess, clasped his hands, and burst into tears. "Madame," he cried, "I am ruined, dishonoured, if you will not buy my necklace. I do not wish to survive so many misfortunes. I shall depart hence, Madame, to go and throw myself into the river." "Rise, Boehmer," the queen said to him, severely. "I have not ordered this necklace of you; I have refused it. The king wished to give it to me, and I refused it; never speak to me of it again. Try to break it up, and to sell it, and don't drown yourself. I am very angry with you for having made this scene in my presence, and before this infant." (She had her daughter, Madame Royale, near her.) "Never let anything like this happen again. Go." Boehmer withdrew, broken-hearted, and for a certain time no one saw anything more of him.

In the month of December, 1784, the partner of Boehmer, Bassange, heard one of his friends, named Achet, talk of the favour of Madame de la Motte. It was a last resource; he thought to profit by it. At his request Achet sought the countess, and begged her to use her influence to persuade the queen to buy an ornament which was only suitable to her. The adventuress replied in an evasive manner, but expressed the desire to see the object of the negotiation. The jeweller hastened to grant the wish of a person so well received at court, and on December 29 Bassange and Achet carried the necklace to Madame de la Motte. The latter looked at the diamonds, admired them, and without giving any positive assurances, nevertheless allowed them to hope.

Three weeks passed; and the jewellers began to fear that this effort had also failed, when on January 21 Madame de la Motte announced to them that the queen had determined to purchase the necklace, but that not wishing to negotiate the acquisition directly, she had charged a great noble, who enjoyed her confidence, to do so. Three days later, the count and countess came in search of Bassange at seven o'clock in the morning, and said to him that the great noble in question would soon appear. A quarter of an hour later, in fact, the negotiator, who had been announced, appeared. It was, as we may imagine, the Cardinal de Rohan. He examined the necklace in detail, asked the price

of it, then withdrew, declaring that he would give an account of the conversation which he had just had to the person who had sent him; that he did not know if he would be permitted to mention her, but that in any case he hoped the jewellers would accept her conditions.

He made these conditions known on January 29: the price of the necklace was fixed at sixteen hundred thousand francs; the payments should be made in four instalments, six months apart; the first should fall due on August 1. The delivery of the jewels should be made on Tuesday, February 1; the purchaser should remain unknown, and exacted the greatest secrecy in the whole affair. Boehmer and Bassange accepted these terms, and placed their signature at the bottom of the treaty, which was entirely in the handwriting of the Prince de Rohan.

On the 1st of February, early in the morning, they betook themselves to the Hôtel de Strasburg, in the Rue Vieille du Temple. The cardinal acknowledged to them then that the purchaser of this precious ornament was no other than the queen, and showed them the act of acquisition signed with the approbation of that princess. Each article bore the word "Approved;" and beneath the last line was traced the signature, "Marie Antoinette of France." At the same time the cardinal showed to the happy merchants a pretended letter from the queen, which he folded over so that only these words could be seen: "I am not in the habit of treating with my jewellers in this manner; you will keep this paper, and arrange everything as you think best."

Letter, approbation, and signature were fabricated by Retaux. But the jewellers did not know the handwriting of the queen, who had never given them any orders except verbally, or through the intermediation of one of her women. Better versed in commercial customs than in the royal signature, they did not reflect that the words "Marie Antoinette of France" were improbable; they withdrew convinced — and who would not have been in their place? — that the purchaser of the necklace was indeed the brilliant sovereign, whose taste for gems they knew.

That very evening, the cardinal set out for Versailles. Followed by a footman, Schreiber, who carried the precious case, he went directly to Madame de la Motte at the Hôtel de la Belle Image. He had hardly arrived before a man entered bearing a letter. Madame de la Motte took it, broke it open, read it, and said to him aloud that it was a note from the queen, and that the

bearer was a lackey of the chamber, named Desclaux. A few moments after, this man re-entered. Monsieur de Rohan had only time to hide behind an alcove, whose door was half open, and from there he saw Madame de la Motte give the necklace to the pretended lackey, who was no other than Retaux. The cardinal recognized him positively for the man who had assisted in the preceding year at the scene in the avenue.

On the following day, February 2, which was a festival, Bassange was in the gallery at Versailles, and placed himself where he should see the royal family, in order to be among the first to enjoy the spectacle of his famous diamonds, whose thousand lights would undoubtedly sparkle upon the neck of the queen, as she passed on her way to the chapel. The Prince de Rohan was also on the watch. Complete deception; the queen passed; she had on only her ordinary jewels. Bassange was astonished; but the cardinal, although surprised himself, reassured him by saying that the queen undoubtedly did not wish to wear her necklace before having apprised the king of her acquisition, and that she had not had time to inform him. Days passed; months passed; occasions for full dress occurred; and the queen persisted in not wearing her new ornament. She went to Paris after the birth of the Duc de Normandie. On that solemn occasion, no necklace. Pentecost came; still nothing. She saw the cardinal, and always treated him with the same disdain. A strange mystery! What was the meaning of such caprice?

Was not this extraordinary obstinacy likely to open the eyes of the blind prelate? Not yet; Madame de la Motte was there to ward off the danger. In order to counteract the effects of this coldness, which might alarm and enlighten her dupe, she took care to transmit to him more frequently than ever the famous notes on blue paper with vignettes, which, by their protestations of secret sympathy, calmed his distrust. In order the better to maintain his illusions, she pretended to borrow a few louis from him; and when he came to see her in the Rue Neuve St. Gilles, she received him in a small, ill-furnished room, which was very high up. How should the cardinal, reassured on the score of the queen by these forged letters, and on that of Madame de la Motte by her evident distress, grow suspicious? During this time the necklace was taken to pieces. Retaux at Paris, Monsieur de la Motte in London, sold the parts of it; and the count, on his return from England on June 3, presented to the banker

Perregaux letters of credit for one hundred and twenty thousand francs, which served to support the luxury of the houses at Paris and at Bar-sur-Aube.

However, the term of the first payment was approaching; the fraud would be discovered. It was necessary for Madame de la Motte to gain time. Retaux forged a new letter. The queen wrote to the cardinal that she found the necklace decidedly too dear; that she demanded a reduction of two hundred thousand francs on the price; and that instead of paying, on August 1, four hundred thousand francs, she should pay seven hundred thousand. The prelate went to the jewellers to inform them of the new desires of their august client. The two partners at first made some difficulties, then they yielded, and on the advice of Monsieur de Rohan, wrote Marie Antoinette the following letter: —

MADAME, — We are overwhelmed with happiness to dare to think that the last arrangements which have been proposed to us, and to which we have submitted with zeal and respect, are a new proof of our submission and devotion to the orders of your Majesty; and it gives us great satisfaction to think that the most beautiful parure of diamonds that exists will be worn by the greatest and best of queens.

On July 12 Boehmer went to Versailles; he was to take the bow, the buckle, and the sword destined for the young Duc d'Angoulême on the occasion of his baptism. On presenting these objects to the queen, on her return from mass, he gave her at the same time the letter which we have just quoted. Marie Antoinette read the letter, understood nothing of it, and burned it. It was the more impossible for her to divine the sense of that enigmatical language as some time before the jeweller, on being questioned by Madame Campan concerning the fate of the famous necklace, had declared that he had sold it at Constantinople to the favourite sultana. A few days after, however, the Baron de Breteuil, minister of the household of the king, sent for Boehmer, and asked him what his incomprehensible note of July 12 had meant. Faithful to his system of mystery, and obedient to the instructions of the cardinal, Boehmer contented himself with replying that there was question of certain jewels which he desired to sell to the queen. In face of these strange evasions and careful reticences, how could Marie Antoinette imagine that there was anything serious? She believed that the mind of her jeweller was affected by the anguish which the neces-

sity of destroying his necklace had caused him; she regarded him as a monomaniac, whose folly was not dangerous, and merited rather pity than anger.

The moment arrived, however, when everything was to be discovered. At the end of July Madame de la Motte produced a note wherein the queen avowed that she could not pay before October 1. The cardinal received it with consternation; he began to have suspicions of the authenticity of the letters; yet either from pride, or because of his passion for Madame de la Motte, whom he did not wish to ruin, he refused to investigate the affair. The adventuress, in order to re-establish a credit which she felt was trembling, hastened to give him a sum of thirty thousand francs as an indemnity to the jeweller for the delay in the payment. The distrust of the cardinal could not withstand a payment of thirty thousand francs; he gave the sum to Boehmer on the 30th of July, and doubted no more. But it was the merchants who became alarmed in their turn at so many delays and mysteries, at the silence of the queen, and the pressure of their creditors; and this disquietude was changed to despair when on August 2 or 3, Madame de la Motte declared to them impudently that the sale which they had concluded was not legal, and that the signature of Marie Antoinette was false. "However," she added, "the cardinal is rich; you can hold him responsible."

Bassange ran to the Hôtel de Strasburg. Monsieur de Rohan, who was beginning to understand, but who did not wish to avow it, and was desirous before everything of hushing up a transaction which was so humiliating to his vanity, affirmed on oath the authenticity of the sale. On the following day Madame de la Motte, who wished to compromise him still more, arrived at his house very much agitated, pretending that she was a victim to a court intrigue, a prey to the persecutions of the police; and the cardinal, who could not resist the strange influence of the adventuress, consented to give her an asylum in his house, together with her husband and her waiting-woman.

In the mean while Bassange's partner, Boehmer, who was but half reassured, went to Crespy to see the chief waiting-woman, Madame Campan, whom he knew, and asked her if the queen had not charged her with some commission for him. On her response in the negative, "But," said he, "to whom must I address myself to obtain the reply to the letter which I gave her?" "To no

one. Her Majesty burned your letter, and did not even understand what you meant." "But, Madame, that is impossible; the queen knows very well that she has some money to give me." "Some money, Monsieur Boehmer! it is a long time since we settled your last account with the queen." "Ah, Madame, you are very much mistaken; a very large sum is owing to me." "What do you mean?" "It is necessary to tell you everything. The queen has kept a secret from you; she has bought my great necklace." "The queen? she refused it; she refused it when the king wished to give it to her." "She changed her mind." "At what time did the queen announce to you that she had decided on the acquisition of your necklace?" "She never spoke to me herself on the subject." "Who, then, was her intermediary?" "The Cardinal de Rohan." "The Cardinal de Rohan!" Madame Campan exclaimed, stupefied; "but the queen has not spoken to him since his return from Vienna. There is no man at the court in greater disfavour. You have been robbed, my poor Boehmer." "The queen pretends to be on ill terms with his Eminence, but he is in reality in favour with her." "But how were the orders of her Majesty transmitted to you?" "In writing, signed by her hand, which I have been forced to show to people from whom I have borrowed money for some time, without, however, succeeding in calming them." "Ah, what an odious intrigue!" Madame Campan cried, more and more stupefied, and not knowing whether she had to do with a fool or a scamp; but feeling that there were some infernal machinations to be discovered, she urged Boehmer to go immediately to Versailles and inform the Baron de Breteuil. But Boehmer, who was probably not anxious to avow to the minister that he had lied, instead of going to him, went to Trianon, and solicited an audience with the queen. The latter, who was tired of his importunities, refused to see him. "He is mad," she replied; "I do not wish to see him."

A few days after, Madame Campan returned from Crespy; the queen sent for her to go over her rôle of Rosine with her, which she was to play in "The Barber of Seville." "Did you know," she said to her, "that that imbecile of a Boehmer came here and asked to speak to me? I refused to receive him. What did he want of me, do you know?" Thus placed in a position to explain, Madame Campan related her whole conversation with Boehmer, and the strange revelations which he had made. Full of surprise and indignation, Marie Antoinette sent for the jeweller; he came on

August 9, insisted upon being paid, and, pressed with questions, ended by avowing what had occurred, or at least what he supposed. The queen listened with growing astonishment and concentrated rage; she did not know what to think of so much folly or so much infamy.

But before taking any resolution, she wished to investigate the affair; and being unable to distinguish the truth in the incoherent declarations of the jeweller, she demanded a written explanation, which was given to her on August 12.

"On Boehmer's departure," Madame Campan has written, "I found her in an alarming state. The idea that any one could believe that such a man as the cardinal had her confidence; that she had made use of him in dealing with a merchant to procure for her, unknown to the king, a thing which she had refused from the king himself, — threw her into despair."

But she did not contemplate for an instant hushing up the affair. Strong in the testimony of her conscience, and yielding to the exigency of her just indignation, she wished that the odious intrigue should be thoroughly investigated. "It is necessary," she said, "that these hideous vices should be unmasked; when the Roman purple and the title of a prince only hide a needy person or a scamp, who dares to compromise the wife of his sovereign, all France, all Europe, must know it." Was this resolution spontaneous in her? Was it due, as Madame Campan insinuates, to the influence of the Abbé de Vermond, and to the Baron de Breteuil, inveterate enemies of the bishop of Strasburg, and who were only too desirous of a scandal to ruin him? In this supposition the first waiting-woman was wrong. The queen consulted no one but her husband. The king came to spend Sunday, the 14th, at Trianon; and it was with him alone that the queen, enlightened by the revelations of Boehmer, and by the memorial which the jewellers had sent her on August 12, determined upon her conduct and the measures it was necessary to take. She thus informs Joseph II. of the iniquitous affair in a letter written on August 22: "Everything has been concerted between the king and me; the ministers knew nothing of it until the moment when the king sent for the cardinal, and interrogated him in the presence of the keeper of the seals and the Baron de Breteuil."

However this may be, it is certain that after an attentive study of the facts then known, and of the documents which they had in their hands, the king and queen were forced to believe in the cul-

pability of the cardinal. His mad prodigalities, his immense debts, despite his immense revenues, his bad reputation, the discontent which he had aroused in his own diocese, where the people accused him of spending on entertainments, on gallantries, on useless and magnificent embellishments of his château of Saverne, his income of eight hundred thousand francs, — everything seemed to inculpate him. In their verbal account, as well as in their memorial, the jewellers only named and incriminated him; at three different times, and again in the month of March, Parliament had accused him of waste in the administration of the Hospital of the Quinze-Vingts, of which he was superior-general. However monstrous it might seem, in the face of this united evidence, one was led, as the king said and the queen wrote, to believe that, pressed by his need for money, he had sought to procure it by appropriating the necklace, in the belief that he would be able to pay the jewellers at the time stated, without anything being discovered. One was obliged to look upon him as a scamp; for as yet nothing warranted one's thinking him a dupe.

On Monday, August 15, at noon, the grand almoner, dressed in his pontifical robes, was on his way to the chapel, when Chanlau, head footman, informed him that the king wished to see him in his cabinet. The queen was there with the keeper of the seals and the Baron de Breteuil.

"You have bought some diamonds from Boehmer," the king said to the cardinal.

"Yes, Sire."

"What have you done with them?"

"I thought they had been given to the queen."

"Who charged you with the commission?"

"A lady named the Comtesse de la Motte-Valois, who showed me a letter from the queen; and I imagined that I was doing something that would be agreeable to her Majesty in undertaking the negotiation."

The queen interrupted him hastily.

"How could you believe, Monsieur, — you to whom I have not spoken for eight years, — that I should choose you to undertake such a negotiation, and through the intervention of such a woman?"

"I see clearly," the cardinal replied, "that I have been cruelly deceived; I will pay for the necklace. The desire which I had to please your Majesty closed my eyes. I suspected no fraud, and I am sorry."

Then he drew from his pocket a case, and took out the letter which he had supposed had been written by the queen to Madame de la Motte, giving him this commission. The king took it, and showing it to the cardinal, he said, —

"This is neither the handwriting of the queen nor her signature. How could a prince of the House of Rohan, how could a grand almoner, imagine that the queen could sign herself 'Marie Antoinette of France'? Every one knows that queens only sign their baptismal names."

The cardinal stammered. The king continued, —

"Explain to me this enigma. I do not wish to find you guilty; I desire your justification."

More and more disturbed, the cardinal turned pale, and supported himself against the table.

"Control yourself, Monsieur le Cardinal, and go into my cabinet; you will there find paper, pens, and ink; write what you have to say to me."

The cardinal passed into the cabinet, and returned at the end of a quarter of an hour with a writing as little clear as his verbal responses had been. The king, convinced of his culpability by his very embarrassment, said to him hotly, "Retire, Monsieur!" and an order was given to arrest him. Neither the representations of certain ministers, nor the supplications of the prelate, who begged for grace, could change the determination of Louis XVI., or persuade him to allow the accused to remain at liberty. "I cannot," he said, "consent thereto, either as king or husband."

"We must put an end to it," he wrote to Vergennes, who had urged him to hush up the affair, — "we must put an end to the intrigues of a rascal who has so scandalously compromised the queen, and who, to justify himself, has nothing to allege but his intimacy with an adventuress of the lowest class. He dishonours his ecclesiastical character. Though he has become cardinal, he is no less a subject of my crown."

As for the queen, she desired a public reparation. "I am anxious," she wrote to Joseph II., "that this scandal, with all its details, should be thoroughly cleared up in the eyes of the world."

The cardinal left the royal chamber with the Baron de Breteuil. A young lieutenant of the guards, Monsieur de la Jouffroy, was there. "Monsieur," the baron said to him, "the king com-

mands you not to leave Monsieur le Cardinal, and to conduct him to your house. You will be responsible for his person, Monsieur."

Agitated at so unexpected an occurrence, afraid of his responsibility, fearful, perhaps, for himself, for he was overwhelmed with debts, the young man lost his head, and neglected the most ordinary precautions: he permitted his prisoner to write a word in pencil. This word, given to the cardinal's *heiduque*, was immediately carried to Paris; and while the major of the body-guard, Monsieur d'Agoult, conducted Monsieur de Rohan first to the Hôtel de Strasburg, then to the Bastille, — where he enjoyed in the beginning the greatest liberty, holding his court as in his hôtel, and continuing, if not to exercise his great functions, at least to use the powers of his great office, — the Abbé Georgel, warned by the note, hastened to destroy the letters of Madame de la Motte, and everything that might compromise his master. When the Baron de Breteuil arrived to put the seals on the cardinal's papers, it was too late; and when, on the 17th, the seals were removed in the presence of all the ministers, with the exception of the Maréchal de Ségur, nothing was found.

Three days after this occurrence, on August 18, at four o'clock in the morning, Madame de la Motte was arrested at Bar-sur-Aube, as she was returning from an entertainment of the Duc de Penthièvre at Château-Villain, where she had displayed all the splendours of her new fortune. Two months afterward, Mademoiselle d'Oliva was captured at Brussels, and in the following spring, Quidor, the agent of police, discovered Retaux de Villette at Geneva, where he was in hiding under an assumed name. Monsieur de la Motte succeeded in escaping to England.

Louis XVI. had given to the cardinal the choice of acknowledging his fault and appealing to the clemency of his sovereign, or of being tried by Parliament. The cardinal chose the latter; and on September 5 the king, filled with indignation, he said, "that any one should have dared to use so august a name and one that was dear to us for so many reasons, and violate with such unheard-of temerity the respect due to the royal majesty," acquainted Parliament by letters-patent with the affair.

One can easily imagine the scandal that a trial begun under such conditions created. A Rohan, grand almoner of France, arrested in the palace like any vulgar malefactor! A cardinal dragged before a secular tribunal! The stupefaction was great,

and the displeasure not less. In Parliament, even before the case was opened, President de Corberon, at the instigation of D'Éprémènil, made a violent attack upon what he called the rape of the cardinal; and all the authority of President d'Ormesson was necessary to adjourn the discussion of this burning question. At Versailles the court was enraged; the *noblesse* were indignant at the outrage to one of their order; the clergy complained of the imprisonment of a prince of the Church. They called a General Assembly on the day following the registration of the letters-patent, to protest against these letters, and to demand ecclesiastical judges. Would not the bishop of Mayence, who was the metropolitan of the bishop of Strasburg, take up the affair? And would the emperor tolerate the violation of the privileges of a prince of the Empire? These questions were asked in public; and people said to one another, not without a secret content, that the authorities would probably be obliged to retreat. The court of Rome itself was aroused, blamed the cardinal for having accepted a lay jurisdiction, and threatened him with a suspension of his honours and functions.

The clamour was general. One saw members of the royal family, like Mesdames, loudly censure the conduct of their nephew and niece for having brought the shady transaction to the light. Intimates even of the queen's set, if we may believe Staël, — the Polignacs, the Vaudreuils, — took sides against her. The House of Condé, the Rohans, the Soubises, the Guéménées, went into mourning, and in this costume placed themselves along the passage of the councillors of the great chamber when they went to the palace. Some princes of the blood openly petitioned in favour of the accused. All who were hostile to royalty, all the malcontents, all those who were jealous, all the friends of the cardinal, and all the enemies of Marie Antoinette, all the remnants of the old cabals of D'Aiguillon and of Marsan, — all those who were envious of the grace, beauty, power, or happiness of their young sovereign united against her. Parliament itself — that secular depository of the laws, that guardian of the majesty and the impartiality of justice — was not able to preserve, in that serious debate, the immutable serenity of a judge; it made a political question of it, an instrument of opposition. "That great body," Beugnot said, "is beginning to lose self-control." It allowed itself in great part to be corrupted, and one was able to lay before the queen the list of the members of the great

chamber who had been bribed by the Rohans, and the amount of money which had been used to bribe them.

"The women," Madame Campan said, "played a part in this affair which was an outrage to morality: it was through them, and by reason of the considerable sums which they had received, that the oldest and most respectable heads were seduced." A *maître des requêtes*, who was present at the session when the documents of procedure were read, took note of what was there said, and transmitted to the advocates of the accused a plan of defence. And the Abbé Georgel confessed that that same vehement adversary of royalty, who was later to defend it with equal violence, and to expiate his blind enthusiasm on the scaffold, D'Épréménil, informed the friends of the Rohans of all the interesting particulars which might be useful to them.

"I am charmed that we have no longer to talk of this horror," the queen wrote to her brother, shortly after the presentation of the case in Parliament. The queen was mistaken: it was by no means finished. The public was too agitated to keep silence; and the partisans of the cardinal, above all, his secretary, neglected no means to excite their emotion. This sorry person — whom Louis XVI., in a moment of legitimate indignation, had wished to turn out-of-doors at Versailles, and of whom he had written to Vergennes, "He who can lie once can lie twenty times," and whom Parliament itself had accused of forgery — avenged himself for the just contempt of his sovereign by redoubling his intrigues and outrages against his queen. Using his privilege as vicar-general of the grand almoner, he had printed and attached to the doors of the sacristies and the churches dependent upon the grand almoner, even to the door of the king's chapel, a statement wherein he compared Monseigneur de Rohan to Saint Paul in irons, and himself to Timothy. A *lettre de cachet* exiled him to Mortagne. This was the only rigorous measure taken against his insulting effrontery. One has accused the old monarchy of despotism; if ever government exhibited patience, pushed even to weakness, it was the government of Louis XVI.

By one of those inconsistencies dear to the French, public opinion, which had until then been so justly severe on the cardinal, whom it had declared to be worthy rather of contempt than hatred, now gave him its sympathy, if not its esteem, at the very time when he least merited it. It regarded him as a victim,

when it should have regarded him as an unfortunate man and a fool. But he had compromised the name of his queen in a low intrigue; he had outraged her by his insensate hopes. This was enough to make him popular. A lady of the court wittily wrote, "The cardinal to-day has for defenders all those who have never come in contact with him." The dependants of the House of Rohan, who were scattered everywhere, sought to arouse interest for the accused among the middle class and the populace. Even fashion took part; the women wore hats "au cardinal" at Longchamps, and decked themselves with yellow and red ribbons, "cardinal on straw colour;" the men carried snuff-boxes of ivory, with a tiny black spot, "au cardinal blanchi." The following couplet was sung in the streets: —

"Our Holy Father reddened him;
The king and queen have blackened him;
But Parliament will whiten him.
Hallelujah!"

The popular poet was not mistaken; he saw clearly into the intrigues of the enemies of the queen, and had divined the issues of the trial.

The investigation of this long and shady affair lasted more than nine months. Finally, on the nights of the 29th and 30th of May, 1786, the prisoner was transferred from the Bastille to the Conciergerie. On the 30th, he appeared before Parliament. All the Rohans were ranged at the door of the great chamber, awaiting the judges. As soon as these appeared, "Messieurs," the Comtesse de Marsan said to them, "you are going to judge us all." When the cardinal entered the audience-chamber, he was received with the greatest honours; he was permitted to sit down, and the councillors saluted him. When he went out, all the judges rose, which was a very great distinction. He was not treated as an accused person, but as a prince, almost as a sovereign. He sought, moreover, to excuse himself; feeling that he was in the presence of judges already prepossessed in his favour, and that it required but little to win them over completely, he humbled himself, alleged his good faith and his credulity. "I have been completely blinded," he said, "by the great desire I had to regain the good graces of the queen." Madame de la Motte was more audacious; she denied everything.

The procurator-general, Joly de Fleury, presented his opinion.

He would require that the cardinal be made to declare that he had acted boldly in permitting himself to believe in a nocturnal meeting on the terrace at Versailles, and in undertaking, unknown to the king and queen, a negotiation for the purchase of the necklace; that he should demand their pardon in the presence of the bench; and finally that he should be condemned to hand in his resignation as grand almoner, and not to approach any place where the royal family might be.

He had hardly finished, when, "Fie, then, Monsieur!" cried the Councillor Séguier, "this opinion is that of a minister, and not that of a procurator-general." "This is the opinion of a savage," Montgodefroy exclaimed. A violent tumult arose in the assembly; opprobrious names were exchanged among the magistrates. The reporters of the affair, Titon de Villotran and Dupuis de Morée, adopted the opinion of the procurator-general, together with fifteen councillors, among whom was Monsieur d'Amécourt. President d'Ormesson suggested a middle way: he proposed to allow the cardinal to keep his offices and dignities, while condemning him to ask the queen's pardon. But the members opposed to the court, the Fréteaus, the Hérault de Séchelles, the Barillons, the Robert de Saint-Vincents, thought that the prelate should be discharged of all accusation; the latter even dared to blame, without any reserve, the conduct of the king and of the queen, and the public trial of the grand almoner. Parliament, which should have set the example of respect to authority, published its contempt for it. Despite the opinion of the first president, and although the best minds supported the opinion of the procurator-general, the opponents carried the day.

A chronicler who is above suspicion adds, "It is certain that a very strong cabal was necessary to obtain this. . . . The more one reflects on the opinion of the procurator-general, the wiser one finds it, despite the fury of Monsieur de Séguier, and the cries of the public, which was almost entirely composed of the partisans of the Rohans."

On May 31, at nine o'clock in the evening, after a deliberation of eighteen hours, sentence was pronounced. With a majority of 26 against 23, Madame de la Motte was condemned to be whipped and to be imprisoned in Salpêtrière; Monsieur de la Motte to the galleys for contumacy; Retaux de Villette to banishment; Mademoiselle d'Oliva was not implicated; the complaint against the cardinal was simply dismissed.

As soon as the sentence was known, there was noisy applause from the ten thousand persons who, since seven o'clock in the morning, had filled the hall of the Pas-Perdus. Enthusiastic acclamations greeted the judges on their exit, as if indeed, as an historian has justly said, there had been question of a great citizen saved by courageous magistrates. Had it not been for an adroit subterfuge of Monsieur de Launay, who led away his prisoner by a private passage, the people would have unharnessed the horses of the cardinal and dragged his carriage to the Hotel de Soubise. When, on the following day, the grand almoner, who was innocent of the crime of swindling, but who was culpable in the first degree of *lèse-majesté*, left the Bastille, it was to the noise of clapping of hands, and cries of "Long live Monsieur le Cardinal!" His hôtel was illuminated with such a profusion of lights that he was embarrassed at a brilliancy which, as Madame de Sabran wittily remarked, showed his shame so clearly. The fish-women went to congratulate him; and the crowd constrained him to appear upon his balcony in his invalid costume, in a white cap and waistcoat, for he was suffering. The accused became victor. The true criminal was the queen, or rather the monarchy; when a people have come to the point of showing such disrespect to their princes, the hour of revolution will soon sound.

Justly more severe than Parliament, the king deprived the cardinal of all his orders and of all his offices, and exiled him to his abbey of Chaise-Dieu, where he was soon forgotten by his friends. "Congratulate me; he is gone," Madame de Marsan said. Somewhat later he received permission to reside at Marmoutiers, where, on reflection, he was heard to deplore his blindness and his mad expectations. But if Louis XVI. might with time show a little leniency, on the day following that unexpected judgment he could only act with rigour. With his loyal nature and the high idea he had of the majesty of the throne, it was impossible for him to allow that the man who had inflicted a mortal outrage on his queen, in supposing her capable of meeting him at night, and of buying, without the knowledge of her husband, a necklace worth sixteen hundred thousand francs, should go unpunished. "Although acquitted of the theft of the necklace, which was the question submitted to justice," Vergennes wrote, "he, Rohan, was not acquitted of his imbecile credulity, and of having thought himself the agent of the queen in this

clandestine bargain." The king, moreover, did not believe the cardinal as innocent of the swindle as Parliament had declared; and it must be said that at that epoch many persons shared this opinion. The sentence of May 31 was, in the eyes of the honest monarch, the work of party prejudice. "They only saw in the affair a prince de Rohan, and a prince of the Church," he said, "while he was nothing but a man pressed for money, and only used his position to dig a ditch in which Monsieur le Cardinal was precipitated in his own turn. Nothing is easier to see, and one need not be an Alexander to cut this Gordian knot."

As for the queen, she was indignant at the issue of the trial, which was so insulting for her.

"Condole with me," she said to Madame Campan. "The intriguer, who wished to ruin me or to procure money for himself by using my name and forging my signature, has just been fully acquitted; but," she added vehemently, "as a Frenchwoman, allow me to condole with you. A people is indeed unhappy to have for its supreme tribunal a rabble of men who only consult their passions, and of whom some are susceptible of corruption, and others of an audacity which they have always manifested in the face of authority, and which they have just exhibited in the most striking manner against those who are clothed with it." The sound of her voice, her shrill tone, her broken speech, the bitterness of her gesture, the irony of her language, the contortion of her features, the compression of her lips, — everything in her appearance bespoke the depth of a wound which nothing could heal. A very natural grief! A very just indignation! It was the first time that the queen had boldly made an appeal to justice, and had courageously courted publicity. Justice had replied by an insult, publicity by calumny.

And yet can we regret this publicity? We think not. If the affair had been suppressed, as Monsieur de Vergennes desired, the consequences, as far as public feeling was concerned, would have been almost the same. The time was passed when a *lettre de cachet* could hide forever a prisoner in the Bastille without public cognizance of his name. A grand almoner of France could not have been exiled without public knowledge of it and inquiry as to the cause of the sudden punishment. Whatever precautions might have been taken, something would always have transpired, and that something, exaggerated, commented on, carried by the thousand voices of rumour, would have become

a new calumny, which, in the absence of authentic documents, it would have been forever impossible to refute.

To-day we know at least, thanks to the documents of the trial, the facts of this shady affair. The intrigue is unmasked in all its details; we know who were the criminals, the dupes, the accomplices, and the victims. The absolute innocence of the queen has been proved by the clearest evidence; and if her contemporaries, ill-disposed and angry, sought to find a new weapon against her honour in that odious intrigue, posterity, more enlightened and just, has loudly proclaimed that everything was done without her knowledge and against her desires.

CHAPTER XXI.

Last Days of Happiness. — Journey to Cherbourg. — The Court at Fontainebleau in 1786. — The Goodness of the Queen. — Marie Antoinette and her Children. — The Sons of the Marquise de Bombelles and of the Marquise de Sabran. — Days of Sorrow. — Scenes at Trianon described by Madame Campan. — Calumny. — Pamphlets and Songs. — Visit of the Archduke Ferdinand, and of the Duchess of Saxe-Teschen. — Acquisition of St. Cloud. — "Madame Deficit." — Calonne and the Queen. — Representation of "Athalie." — The Portrait of the Queen is not Exhibited. — Estrangement from the Polignacs. — The Death of Sophie Beatrix.

THREE weeks after the end of the trial, Louis XVI. set out for Normandy. He was to visit the immense works which, under the direction of Dumouriez, were to make of Cherbourg a great military post, an advance post of surveillance, or, if need were, of defence against England. A royal journey was ordinarily a solemn and expensive affair. Louis XVI. made his without pomp and almost without retinue, taking with him only his first equerry, his captain of the guards, his first gentleman of the chamber, four officers of the Light Guards, and eight guards, and refusing all official receptions. He visited everything at Cherbourg, was present on the day following his arrival at three o'clock in the morning, at the immersion of one of the cones of the dike which closed the harbour, inspected the works of the citadel, watched the manœuvres of the fleet under Monsieur de Rioms, astonishing every one by the correctness and extent of his knowledge, and charming every one by his benevolence and simplicity. Charming stories were told of him, similar to those told of Henri IV. On passing through Houdan, he had entered the house of a peasant woman for a moment. This woman, delighted to receive her king, threw herself at his feet, and besought him to grant her a favour. "What is it?" asked

the prince. "Sire, it is to kiss you." He consented with a good grace, then added, "Now it is my turn." And a chronicler relates that the royal kiss was given in such a manner as to lead one to think that the occurrence had not displeased his Majesty.

Nor was this all. The king demanded of the peasant it she desired nothing more. "No, Sire," replied the woman; "I have no wants; I am now happier than a queen. But I have a very poor neighbour, who has eleven children, and whose creditors are threatening to seize her effects." Louis XVI. sent for the neighbour, promised to arrange her affairs, and kept his word.

Such anecdotes became known, and attracted a crowd round the monarch. This journey of eight days was a perpetual ovation. At Caen, where the keys of the city were presented to him, with these words, "*Cordibus apertis inutiles*," and where he ordered the guards to allow every one — "my children," as he called them — to approach; at Rouen, where, to satisfy the people, he walked down the Rue de Pont; at Honfleur, where he saw for the last time the evolution of the squadron; at Havre, where he arrived after a stormy passage, — everywhere, in the army, in the navy, in the city, and in the country, there resounded that cry which was then so French, "Long live the king!" The prince was happy over these acclamations, which were becoming rare near the throne. To the cry of "Long live the king!" he replied with the cry, "Long live my people!" "You will, I think, be content with me," he wrote gayly to the queen, to whom he sent news every day, "for I have not once, I think, made use of my gruff tone." He was delighted with his journey, and every one was delighted with him. It seemed as if it were a renewal of that ancient tie which, since centuries, had united the dynasty and France, a fresh vow of loyalty on the part of the people, of love and kindness on the part of the king. When on June 29 Louis XVI. returned to Versailles, still moved by the applause of an entire province, he took his second son, the Duc de Normandie, in his arms. "Come, my big Norman," he said to him, laughing, "thy name will bring thee luck!"

The queen was not less pleased than the king at the popular enthusiasm. She envied it, perhaps, for she was no longer accustomed to it. There was, however, during that year a renewal of her popularity. This was during the autumn, at Fontainebleau.

"There was such a crowd at Fontainebleau," Madame de Staël wrote to Gustavus III., "that you could only talk to the two or three persons who were playing with you, and there was no pleasure to be got from being in society except the pleasure of being stifled; but it was above all around the queen that the waves of the crowd surged. . . . The expression of countenance of all those who awaited a word from her was a sufficiently interesting study for the observer. Some tried to attract her attention by immoderate laughing at what their neighbour said to them, which under any other circumstance would probably hardly have caused them to smile. Others assumed a preoccupied, absent-minded air, in order not to have the appearance of thinking of that which really absorbed them. They turned their heads in the opposite direction; but despite this, their eyes were glued to the steps of the queen. Others, when the queen asked them what the weather was like, thought that they must not miss such an occasion of making themselves known, and replied at great length to her question; but others again showed respect without fear, and eagerness without avidity."

Thus at the end of 1786, and even in the beginning of 1787, Marie Antoinette was still the star to which all eyes turned. Her light was still radiant, though already somewhat tempered and veiled by I know not what shade of melancholy. The queen felt that she was growing old; and already, in 1785, she had declared to Mademoiselle Bertin that as she was nearly thirty, she had decided to give up all those ornaments which were suited to extreme youth, and that she would no longer wear either feathers or flowers. She was no longer the lively and gay young woman with the slender waist, the rippling and sometimes mocking laugh, eager for pleasure and easily carried away, fond of balls, races, and play. She was a woman of thirty, with a more imposing aspect, beginning to grow stout, with that amplitude of form which adds majesty, without heaviness, to elegance; her smile, always enchanting, was graver; she felt the weight of the crown, and was matured by experience. If Mercy had still addressed his secret reports to the empress, they would no longer have been filled with complaints against the dissipation and frivolity of the princess; for at the very time when Marie Antoinette began to be the butt of calumny, she least deserved it.

The court was well regulated; the balls were brilliant. All games of hazard were severely forbidden; the queen banished from her table all high players, renounced the excitement of faro

for the calmer pleasure of billiards, reprimanded the Comte d'Artois, who was always impetuous and light, separated herself from young people to discourse from preference with grave and serious men, and, as an eye-witness has said, "clearly showed, by her attitude and her conversation, that she knew how to preserve the principles of honour and probity among those who surrounded her." She encouraged arts and industry, took under her protection the glass manufactory of St. Cloud, and in order to encourage the weaving of silk, which had been established at Paris by a Monsieur Villiers, declared that in the future she would wear only French silks. She economized in her dress, and — pardon the detail which is somewhat vulgar but decisive — this woman who was the arbiter of elegance and taste had her gowns mended, her skirts retrimmed, her slippers resoled.

Her intelligence was quick without being profound, and always kindly; she possessed in a supreme degree that obliging memory which is so pleasing in princes, and which gains for them more hearts than their good deeds. Her bearing was proud. Her eye, always limpid, had become more penetrating. Her welcome was impressive, without ceasing to be affable. Her familiarity was tempered with nobility, her grace with majesty. One admired the woman, but was conscious of the queen. Her beauty attracted all eyes; her goodness attracted all hearts; her natural dignity commanded respect. "It is difficult, I think, to throw more grace and kindness into civility," Madame de Staël wrote. "She has, however, a kind of affability which does not allow you to forget that she is queen, and yet always persuades you that she has forgotten it."

Then beneath the diadem of the sovereign, one saw the smile of the mother; she was there with her four children, — for on July 9, 1786, a second princess, Sophie Beatrix, had been born. She was there at Fontainebleau as at Versailles, leaning over their cradle, attentive to every movement, watching their sleep with tenderness, alarmed at the smallest illness, shuddering before an attack of coughing, trembling at a fever, watching beside their beds when they were inoculated, and pushing her precaution to the point of shutting herself up with them in the château, in order that they might not communicate the contagion to the children who might come to play in the park, following with a vigilant eye and enlightened solicitude their physical, intellectual, and moral development. She reproved their impatience, and allowed

them to exhibit no pride. She desired her daughter to have only four women; she took her with her to Fontainebleau in order not to lose sight of her education; and during this time, the dauphin, who was still quite young, remained at La Muette, dressed simply as a little sailor, accessible to every one, and delighting all by his affability. There is not a letter to Marie Antoinette's friends, not a letter to her brothers, which does not abound in details of the health and a thousand incidents in the life of her dear little ones. She goes to see them at every hour of the day and night; and once when she had gone unexpectedly to see the Duc de Normandie, to whom some leeches had been applied without forewarning her, she fell in a faint from the shock and the fright. With what anguish did she follow the first symptoms of the disease which was to carry off the dauphin! But also how she rejoiced in the good health of her second son, so strong, so well, so fresh, — "a true peasant child," she said gayly.

And at the same time, what efforts she made to form their minds, above all, their hearts! One year, on the approach of the 1st of January, she had the most beautiful playthings brought from Paris to Versailles; she showed them to her children, and when they had looked at them and admired them, said to them that they were without doubt very beautiful, but that it was still more beautiful to distribute alms; and the price of these presents was sent to the poor.

Thus she made her children serve their apprenticeship in charity. While the Abbé d'Avaux taught Madame Royale grammar and history, the queen gave her daughter lessons in handiwork; she herself taught her to do needle-work, and accustomed her little hands to make chemises and baby clothes, which she had distributed among the indigent by the curés of Versailles. It was not to her greatest favourites, but to the most worthy, that she confided the care of her children. When the dauphin had arrived at an age to have a governor, neither Monsieur de Vaudreuil was chosen, despite the support of the Polignacs, nor the Duc de Guines, who had formerly been in favour, nor the Duc de la Vauguyon, although he had been educated with the king; she sent for the Duc d'Harcourt, in his province of Normandy, whose reputation for honesty was well established. The queen not only presided over their education, but she took part in the games of her young family. In order to amuse them, she assembled about her, at Trianon or at Versailles, the sons and

daughters of the principal personages of the court; she danced with them; she had them play comedies, and often took part in them herself. This love for children, which was so deep in Marie Antoinette, overflowed even for the children of others. The correspondence and memoirs of the time are filled with charming instances of this sweet and pure passion. No beautiful child appeared at court that the queen did not notice him, admire him, and caress him. One day it was the little boy of Madame de Bombelles, whom she perceived as he came out of Madame Elisabeth's apartment; she stopped him to look at him, allowed him to play with her fan, and told the happy mother that she found him charming. Another time it was Elzéar de Sabran whom she encountered; she embraced him on both cheeks; and on the following day she said to Madame de Sabran, "Do you know that I kissed a gentleman yesterday?" "Madame, I know it, for he boasted of it;" and the queen laughed, complimented the mother on her son, on his height, on his healthy appearance, on his talent for playing comedy. And the mother smiled in her turn and was delighted and declared that the queen was "adorable;" and fifty years later, the child, who had grown to be an old man, preserved and recalled with emotion and a naïve pride the memory of this kiss from the queen.

Who would not then have proclaimed her, as the Prince de Ligne did, queen by her grace and charity; and who would not have cried with him, "It is only the wicked who can speak ill of her, and only fools who will believe it"?

And yet these fools and wicked men were to be met with; and among those very courtiers who pressed about her to solicit a glance, how many of them perhaps augmented the number of those wicked men and fools!

One day at Trianon, on Sept. 16, 1786, Madame Campan, on entering the chamber of her royal mistress in the morning, found her still in bed, holding some letters in her hand, and her face bathed in tears, her voice interrupted by sobs. "Ah, the wicked men, the monsters!" the unhappy princess cried. . . . "What have I done to them? . . . I wish I were dead!" And when Madame Campan offered her some orange-water and ether, "No," she replied, with heart-breaking bitterness, "no; if you love me, leave me; it would be better if I were dead!" and throwing her arms over the shoulders of her first waiting-woman, she burst into tears.

Madame Campan never knew what was the cause of this violent grief, which the friendship alone of the Duchesse de Polignac succeeded in calming. It was one of those black clouds which threatened to break over the country, and which a purer breeze drove away. But how many other clouds were to follow, which the breath of friendship could not dissipate!

For a long while calumny had appeared on the horizon of the queen; and he who had so well described this spectre in the last piece played at Trianon was not free from the suspicion of having aided its birth. Marie Antoinette had at first laughed at it, and had amused herself with singing the couplets wherein the Chevalier de Boufflers had wittily transformed into virtues the faults with which the libels had reproached her. But since the adventure, either true or false, of the Jew, Angelucci, what a long road had been traversed! First, it is the morality of the queen that is impugned, then her friendships, then her expenditures, even her simplicity. They sought to alienate her husband's heart from her, and the heart of the nation. Indecent pamphlets appeared; they flooded the court and the city; they were even attached to the door of Notre Dame; they were distributed by the servants of the palace; they were fabricated by inspectors of police; they glided beneath the king's napkin. They were called,—"The Rise of Aurora;" "The Loves of our Queen;" "The Coquette and the Impotent;" "The Trial of the Three Kings,"—"a detestable work for every good Frenchman," as a chronicler said; "The Royal Almanac;" "The Life of Marie Antoinette," and again, "The Portfolio of a Red Heel," and presently essays on the life of Marie Antoinette, and the infamous memoirs of Madame de la Motte. It would be impossible to enumerate them all, and still more impossible to quote any fragments of them. The lawsuit concerning the necklace was a signal for a veritable flood of obloquy.

The authors for the most part were unknown; Champcenetz was named, and the Marquis de Louvois, Thévenot de Morande. The instigators were better known; they were the enemies of Choiseul, the D'Aiguillons, the Marsans, even the members of the royal family,—Madame Adélaïde, and the Duc d'Orléans, the Condés, perhaps the Comte de Provence,—all those whom the power of the queen threw into the shade, whom her preference for others wounded, even those whom her kindness distinguished, for the ungrateful were added to the envious. Never was a more infernal conspiracy contrived with more cleverness, and by

more various conspirators. Never, alas! was a plot more successful. Not an act, not a step, not a word, but was travestied. The queen after the peace of 1783 received with distinction some English noblemen who came to Versailles and to Fontainebleau, to forget the old rivalry of the two countries. Lord Strathaven, the Duke of Dorset, Lord Fitzgerald, were said to be the queen's lovers. She manifested some sympathy for some young Swedes or Austrians who had come from their country to spend their blood in the service of France, — Fersen, Stedingk, Esterhazy; these were also called lovers, without counting the Frenchmen, — Arthur Dillon, nicknamed the beautiful Dillon; Édouard Dillon, at the sight of whom Marie Antoinette's countenance "became radiant;" and that miserable fool of a Lauzun, and the Chevalier de Coigny and the Comte d'Artois and the Duc de Chartres. Obscene songs were circulated and received with avidity in the salons, though they were not delicate either in point of taste or morality. They were eagerly received by Maurepas, who had always loved indecencies, — above all, when he could use them as a weapon against the power which threw him into the shade. And one saw the courtiers ride post-haste from Versailles to the opera, to amuse themselves with those who sang of the pretended good fortune of the handsome Dillon or Monsieur de Coigny.

In 1785 the Archduke Ferdinand and his wife, following the example of his two brothers, made a visit to France, where his affability pleased every one; but the presence of the archduke, like that of Maximilian, brought up questions of precedence which were new seeds of discord in the royal family. The Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Teschen, who came to Versailles a few months later, finally carrying out a project which they had formed two years before, avoided this inconvenience; but if they were charmed with the affability of the queen, and with her conversation, they caught in Paris, that sojourn of pleasure and inconsistency, the murmurs of calumny and the first rumblings of the storm.

Marie Antoinette, in order to be nearer the capital, and to procure for her children, especially for the dauphin, who was already suffering, a purer and fresher air during the summer, expressed the desire to have the palace of St. Cloud; the king bought it from the Duc d'Orléans, and gave it to his wife. It was to be a residence for the royal family during the extensive repairs which were necessary at Versailles. The expense was not as considera-

ble as one imagined, nor disproportioned to the revenues of the monarch, since it was covered in great part by sales that were made at the same time. No matter; it was the acquisition of St. Cloud which ruined the finances of France. Messieurs of the Inquiry fulminated against Messieurs of the Great Chamber, who had registered the letters-patent of the king, giving six millions to the queen to enjoy in her own right, and to dispose of as she pleased, as well as of the estates and domains which she might acquire by means of this sum; and the voices of the salons, the rumour of the street, bestowed on Marie Antoinette the injurious and fatal nickname of "Madame Deficit." Four words, printed at the head of the notices attached to the park gates, "De par la Reine," — very natural words, since the queen was at home at St. Cloud as at Trianon, — augmented the murmurs and aroused I know not what umbrageous susceptibility. One saw therein an encroachment on the privileges of the king, an attack on the rights of the House of France, which was to be despoiled for the profit of the House of Austria; and D'Éprémênil cried in full Parliament that it was impolitic and immoral to see palaces belonging to the queen of France.

Marie Antoinette felt an insurmountable antipathy toward Calonne, whose worth she had soon judged. Not only would she not ask him for any money, but even refused what he offered her; the accounts of the time affirm this, and authentic documents establish it. But what did popular malevolence care for the truth? They hummed in the streets this stanza from a *potpourri*, which was flat and lacking in wit: —

"All love for Calonne I disclaim,
'T is for the gold he 'll freely give.
To him I turn for sure reprieve
From debts that would disgrace my name;
My favourite also plays this game,
And then we both laugh in our sleeve, in our sleeve."

When, on the fall of the comptroller-general, the populace amused itself by burning his effigy, the scroll which hung from the manikin which represented him accused the queen of having sent to her brother one hundred millions in three years, — and this at the moment when that brother was reproaching her for having become too French, and for having nothing German about her but her face.

Thus calumny descended the steps of the throne to the palace, from the palace to the salon, from the salon to the street; and its poisoned arrows pierced the heart of the unfortunate woman while waiting to strike at her head. In 1783 Madame Lebrun painted Marie Antoinette in the graceful costume she wore at Trianon, with her straw hat and a white muslin robe; it was immediately rumoured that the queen had been painted in her chemise. Four years later, in 1787, there was a similar insult for the beautiful picture wherein the same artist represented Marie Antoinette surrounded by her children. The frame having been brought empty, "Ah, here is Madame Deficit!" some one cried; and this malicious saying, wherein was associated a vulgar incident and an odious calumny, immediately found credit with the public. At the opera the queen was hissed. At the Théâtre Français they made an outrageous application to her of the threatening prophecies of Joad against Athalie. A caricature was openly sold, which showed Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette seated at a sumptuous table, while a crowd of starving people surrounded them, with this legend: "The king drinks; the queen eats; the people cry." And a day came when the lieutenant of police warned the unfortunate princess not to show herself again in Paris, as she would not be safe.

The Comte de la Marck was right in saying, "It is in the malicious sayings and lies circulated against the queen that we must seek the pretext for the accusations of the Revolutionary tribunal against Marie Antoinette in 1793."

And as if all sorrows were to fall at the same time on that head which had been radiant so long, friendship itself became cold. The favourite so assiduous during the time of good fortune became indifferent in the hour of trial.

Between the queen and the comptroller-general, the Polignacs decided in favour of Calonne. The queen was displeased at this; she no longer went to her friend's house without having first asked what persons were there; and often after the reply, she abstained from going thither altogether. Madame de Polignac, instead of being touched, was hurt; and one day when her royal mistress made some affectionate observations to her concerning it, "I think," she replied in a cold tone, "that because your Majesty wishes to come to my salon, that is not a reason for you to assume to exclude my friends." The queen, who was loyal in her affections, did not show that she was hurt at this imperti-

nent reply; she did more, she excused it. "I am not angry with Madame de Polignac," she said; "at bottom she is good and she loves me, but those about her have subjugated her." She contented herself with deserting the salon of her former favourite, and separating herself from the young people of her set, and bestowed her preference upon a woman who was sweeter, more devoted, and totally free from ulterior motives, the Comtesse d'Ossun; and her two friends, Mercy and Fersen, following the example of the queen, deserted, in their turn, the Polignac circle.

The favourite's set was displeased at an estrangement which was likely to separate them from the source of all benefits; they became jealous of the growing favour of Madame d'Ossun, and did not hide their irritation. Madame de Polignac departed to go to some springs, and threatened to hand in her resignation; and her friends made common cause with the enemies of Marie Antoinette in their war of songs and perfidious insinuations. They talked maliciously of a schottische danced by the queen with Lord Strathoven at the house of Madame d'Ossun. One of the *habitués* of the Polignac salon, who more than any other owed profound gratitude and respect to the queen, wrote one of the most wicked couplets against her; and this couplet, founded on an odious lie, went to nourish those echoes of Paris and Versailles which for a long time had repeated only calumny.

To the desertions of her friends were added the sorrows of a mother. On Wednesday, June 15, 1787, the youngest daughter of Marie Antoinette, Sophie Beatrix, only eleven months old, was taken with a vague indisposition; on the 19th she died, charming in her death, but inflicting upon the heart of the poor mother that incurable wound dealt by the first loss of a child. The queen, profoundly grieved, shut herself up at Trianon without equipage or retinue, alone with the king and Madame Elisabeth. "Come," she wrote to her sister-in-law, "we shall weep over the death of my poor little angel. . . . I have need of your heart to console mine."

And when some of her intimate friends, to soften her grief, reminded her of the youth of the young princess, "Do you forget," she replied, "that she would have been a friend?"

A friend! she had greater need of one than ever; and not finding one on earth, she sought one on high. "For some time," the ambassador from Sweden wrote, "the queen seems to have turned devout."

Assailed as woman, as friend, as m
herself said, to her "unfortunate dest
nance for affairs, she threw herself i
without uttering this cry of despair, w
preserved: "Ah, there is no more ha
have made me a politician!"

CHAPTER XXII.

The Notables. — Fall of Calonne. — Brienne; his Reforms; his Unpopularity recoils upon the Queen. — Recall of Necker. — Convocation of the States-General. — A Flood of Brochures. — Deceit of Thiers. — Situation of Marie Antoinette in 1789 in Relation to the Royal Family. — The Comte and Comtesse de Provence. — The Comte and Comtesse d'Artois. — Madame Elisabeth. — Madame. — The Condés. — The Duc d'Orléans.

DESPITE his pretension, Calonne had not succeeded in overcoming the deficit in the treasury. He had done worse; he had sensibly augmented it. Parliament was hostile; the public was alarmed; his financial scheme had failed. The comptroller-general resolved upon a grand *coup;* he proposed to the king to convoke an Assembly of Notables. Louis XVI. adopted the idea with enthusiasm; the notion of imitating Henri IV., of drawing near to his people, or at least to their principal representatives, of speaking to them face to face, and in a way frankly, pleased his generous heart and passion for the public good. On the day following that on which he had declared to his council his intention of convoking the Notables, he wrote to Calonne, —

"I was not able to sleep last night, but it was from pleasure."

The queen had not been informed of this project. She was hurt, so it was said, at this silence, and remained for several hours pensive and silent. Although she took a smaller part in politics than was thought abroad and by the public, she was beginning to realize the true state of affairs, — the present, with its difficulties; the future, with its perils. The king had only confided his intention to the keeper of the seals, Miroménil, and to Vergennes, who, since the death of the Comte de Maurepas, had fulfilled the functions of prime minister without having the title. Unfortunately, nine days before the opening of the Assembly, on Feb. 13, 1797, Vergennes died. This was at this

moment a very great loss. The calm and cool judgment of that minister, his great experience of men and things, the confidence which the king placed in him, the consideration which he enjoyed, would have given weight to the plans of Calonne, and might have insured their success. With him dead, there was no one in the ministry whose influence was preponderant enough to direct opinion. Montmorin, who succeeded him, had neither his talent nor his authority; and Breteuil had but mediocre intelligence, and was moreover unpopular because of his brusqueness, besides being the inveterate enemy of the comptroller-general.

The delay in opening the Assembly, successively fixed for January 29, then for February 22, was a mistake. The Notables, who had arrived in Paris a month before, not knowing what to do with themselves, and annoyed at the delay and the time which they were obliged to lose, had no other occupation but to listen to the criticisms and receive the complaints of the malcontents. The public was impatient, on its side. They already laughed and sung and announced that the great troop of Monsieur de Calonne was about to give the first representations of the "False Appearances of Debts and of Repudiation."

The plans of the minister were vast. They comprised the suppression or lessening of certain taxes, such as the capitation tax and the tax on salt, a more equal distribution of the income tax, which was to strike at the same time all proprietors, whether privileged or not, and the establishment in the whole kingdom of parish, district, and provincial assemblies. It was a political reform as well as a financial reform, — a wise reform, on the whole, whose peaceful realization would perhaps have prevented many disasters. But in politics it is often less the idea than the man who is rejected, and unfortunately the comptroller-general was so despised that his name was enough to discredit the most useful measure. At the same time, his levity prevented him from foreseeing obstacles or contriving the means to overcome them. It would have been easy, since the king had reserved to himself the choice of the Notables, to make up an assembly of enlightened and loyal men, determined to vote for a reform which, for the most part, would have been a sacrifice for them, — in a word, to insure for himself a majority. Calonne neglected even this precaution; and from the start it was easy to see that there would be a formidable opposition, more hostile, perhaps, to the person of the minister than to his plan. Feeling

himself attacked, Calonne made the mistake of attacking in his turn. His address to the Notables, with an explanation of his own system, contained a disguised but transparent criticism of the administration of Necker. Necker replied; his friends took sides in the struggle; those whose privileges were threatened defended their rights; the Notables, hurt by certain publications, exacted statements of receipt and expenditure. There was a deluge of recrimination and of complaints — some of them just, others of them violent — against a minister whose administration gave so many openings to criticism, and whose reputation accorded but ill with his protestations of disinterestedness and economy. At the end of six weeks, on April 8, Calonne fell. Exiled to his estate of Allouville, in Lorraine, he departed, furious with the queen, to whom both he and public opinion attributed his disgrace and exile. Then when Parliament presently decreed his arrest, he lost his head, and with an utter disregard of appearances, fled to London, where, if we may believe Madame Campan, his rancour made him the accomplice of Madame de la Motte in the composition of her infamous memorials against Marie Antoinette.

Who should replace him as comptroller-general? Choiseul had died on Sunday, May 9, 1785, carrying with him into the tomb, as it were, a last souvenir of the happiness of the queen. Two names were proposed as successors to Calonne, — Necker and the archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne. The king felt an equal repugnance to them both. "I have no wish," he said one day, "either for Necker or the priest." He did not deny the talents of Necker, but he feared the defects of his character; and hurt by the publication of his work on the "Administration of the Finances," he had recently, at the instigation of Calonne, exiled him to forty leagues from the capital.

To recall him at that moment, and still more, to give him a portfolio, was openly to give the lie to himself, and to shake with his own hands the prestige of the royal authority, which was already too much weakened. If a few faithful friends, like Montmorin, still urged the name of Necker, the situation itself seemed to indicate that of the archbishop of Toulouse. His influence over the Notables, his position as the avowed chief of the opposition against Calonne, and what we to-day call the regular rotation of Parliamentary institutions, naturally designated him as the successor of the minister whose fall he had brought about.

Ambitious, determined from his infancy to play a great rôle, pursuing his ends by every means, but patient and resolute in waiting, insinuating and versatile, knowing how to applaud the philosophers and to mourn for the Jesuits at the same time, welcomed by women, regarded with favour by the economists, exhibiting superficial but varied accomplishments, Brienne enjoyed in the whole kingdom a reputation for incontestable cleverness.

The king alone felt for this priest, who had no morality and perhaps no faith, the aversion which, with his strong religious convictions, he felt for all philosophical priests. When on the death of Monseigneur Beaumont, archbishop of Paris, Monsieur de Brienne was proposed as his successor, "It is at least necessary that the archbishop of Paris should believe in God," he had answered brusquely. He had, moreover, extreme repugnance to admit a priest into his council; and more than once he had been heard to declare that he should never place an ecclesiastic at the head of affairs.

On the other hand, the queen had a high opinion of the archbishop of Toulouse, and had been accustomed for a long time to regard him as the future prime minister. One has attributed this opinion of Marie Antoinette to the exclusive influence of the Abbé de Vermond, who was eager to show his gratitude to the man to whom he owed his fortune. If the queen had such esteem for the talents of Brienne as to determine her to urge his elevation, it is not the Abbé de Vermond alone who must be held responsible for it, but every one, — Choiseul, who had formerly recommended the young Loménie to Louis XV.; the financier of Invaux, who consulted and wrote to him, "I ought to cede the comptroller-generalship to you;" Mercy, who, since 1775, had proclaimed the superiority of the archbishop's talents and had almost gone surety for his conduct in religion and morals; Joseph II., who two years later, after a conversation which pleased him infinitely, went to visit him at Toulouse, and conceived of him so high an opinion that he wrote to his sister to recommend him to her as one of the persons most capable and most fit to enter the ministry. Both Turgot and Malesherbes wished to confide to him a portfolio, and only gave it up because of the opposition of Maurepas. Maurepas himself only wished to keep him out of the council because he regarded him as a rival whose superiority might throw him into the shade. The

States of Languedoc, it was said, did not cease to render homage to his merits and to his intelligence, to the interest which he took in the affairs of the province, to the talent with which he directed various measures of public usefulness and charity. It was, in a word, the general sentiment that Brienne was one of the first personages in France, and fitted for the first rôle.

With such support, and with such public opinion, Vermond had no great need to persuade his former pupil that she was doing a wise and patriotic deed in placing a man in power whom the public voice called there. If the results did not answer to the brilliant expectations; if one perceived too late that he was superficial rather than profound, — at least we must acknowledge that the queen was not the only one deceived, and that her illusion was that of the whole, or almost of the whole nation. Brienne's fame was brilliant; she thought it substantial.

The friends of Necker rendered such homage to the reputation of him whom they were later to attack so violently that the most influential among them did not hesitate to open a negotiation in order to place the two rivals in the ministry together. The Maréchal de Beauvau conducted the affair; it was agreed that the archbishop should be the first to enter, and that three months later he should give the direction of the finances to Necker. The king, urged at the same time by both parties, ended, despite his personal repugnance, by believing that the public demanded the nomination of Monsieur de Brienne. He spoke of it to the queen: "I have always heard Monsieur de Brienne spoken of as a very distinguished man;" that princess replied, "I shall see him enter the ministry with pleasure."

On the 1st of May, 1787, the archbishop of Toulouse was made chief of the council of finance; Monsieur de Fourqueux, who had filled the interval after the fall of Calonne, an honest man, but without talent, was replaced by Monsieur de Villedeuil; and Necker was once more set aside. The Duc de Nivernais entered the council; Monsieur de Malesherbes was also recalled. But Brienne was one of those men who, according to the saying of the poet, shone in the second rank, but went under an eclipse in the first. Having arrived at the summit of his desires, he soon revealed himself such as he was, — without great views, without serious knowledge, without ideas, and without plan. Incapable of any innovations, he was only able to resume with slight modifications the schemes of Calonne; and at the end of

a month the Assembly of the Notables was dissolved, without having accomplished anything, leaving the finances in disorder, the public apprised of the disorder, the royal authority weakened, since it had been obliged to yield, and their own prestige gone, since they had realized none of their solemn promises, carrying away with them and sowing in their own provinces the germs of discontent and revolution.

It would seem that once alone and rid of the Notables, who, moreover, before their departure had given him a species of *carte blanche*, Brienne would act with promptitude and vigour. He did nothing of the sort; he lost precious time, undertook insufficient measures, and when he finally sent the acts which decreed the principal financial reforms for registration, the resistance which he had no longer to fear from the Notables he found more obstinate and implacable from Parliament.

Jealous of the popularity which had for a moment surrounded the Notables when they had fought Calonne, displeased with the court, since it had offended it in the affair of the necklace, Parliament had become more and more determined in its course of opposition. This ardent defender of the rights of the people made itself the champion of the privileged, because at that moment the privileged were struggling against the government. Some of the councillors, like D'Éprémênil, Fréteau, Duport, fanned the flame and added fuel to the fire. They declared that before consenting to a new tax they must know the condition of the treasury; their pretension was denied. "You would demand to know the state of receipt and expenditure," the Abbé Sabattier cried. "We demand the States-General." . . . The redoubtable question had been opened, and with characteristic French levity had been propounded by a play of words. D'Éprémênil developed with warmth the idea of the Abbé Sabattier; and Parliament, carried away by his fiery eloquence, made the following declaration: —

"The Nation, represented by the States-General, alone has the right to grant subsidies to the king, the necessity for which must first have been clearly demonstrated."

The emotion was great among serious men and the old councillors. President d'Ormesson, turning to the ardent adversary of the court, pronounced in a sad voice these prophetic words, "Take care, Monsieur, that Providence does not punish your fatal counsels by granting your wishes."

On August 6 a bed of justice was held at Versailles to have the edicts authoritatively registered. On the following day Parliament protested, and declared the transaction, which had been enregistered, void; it was exiled to Troyes.

A month later it was recalled. The government oscillated without ceasing, like a man who is about to fall, incapable of walking firmly either along the path of resistance or in that of compromise; it acted with vigour one day only to be timid and retreat the next. The struggle soon began. The Duc d'Orléans, who had taken sides with Parliament, was exiled to Villers-Cotteret; two councillors, the Abbé Sabattier and Fréteau, were imprisoned, then banished; presently two others, D'Éprémenil and Montsabart, were arrested with military parade, and under dramatic circumstances, which struck the popular imagination and aroused all minds. Finally on May 8, 1788, at a new bed of justice, the king ordered the registration of several edicts, one of which, establishing forty-seven great bailiwicks, sensibly modified the jurisdiction of the Parliaments, and another of which took away from them the registration of the laws, to give it to a plenary court.

The public, violently excited by all of these measures, pronounced against the ministers; the Duc d'Orléans, who until then had been decried and despised, became a popular hero; the imprisoned councillors were venerated as martyrs to liberty. Troubles broke out on all sides, — in Bretagne, in Dauphiné, in Provence, in Béarn, in Languedoc. The agitation descended to the street. France was on fire.

Of all the reforms undertaken by Brienne, and the Assembly of Notables before their separation, only one perhaps was popular, — that ordering changes and retrenchment in the households of the king and queen. These changes went into effect on April 19, 1787. The Life Guards were reduced to four squadrons of two hundred and fifty men; the corps of the *gendarmerie*, the light horse, the guards of the gate, were suppressed. The queen was most ardent in preaching economy; she greatly regretted that the true condition of the treasury had been hidden from her. "If I had known it," she said, "I should never have made so many acquisitions, and I should have been the first to set the example of reform in my household; but how could I form any idea of this distress, since when I asked for thirty thousand francs, they sent me sixty?" From the opening of the Assembly of the Notables she had given up play, and had dismissed the bankers who held

it. Three young men who had played despite her prohibition were sent back to their regiment. In the month of August the economies were more considerable and of greater extent. The queen made retrenchments in the number of her horses, in her table, in her toilet. She dismissed Mademoiselle Bertin, suspended work on St. Cloud, gave up her balls, and requested the Duc de Polignac to hand in his resignation as director-general of the post-roads, which had been given him some years before, and which they now wished to unite to the letter-post, in the hands of Monsieur d'Ogny. The king put down his wolf and boar hunting establishments, suppressed the falconry, united his small stable with his great, and decided to sell several of the royal houses, such as La Muette and Choisy.

But all these reforms seemed insufficient in the eyes of the public; while, on the other hand, they displeased to the last degree those who suffered from them, some of whom were not able to pay their debts. The Duc de Polignac did not give up without bitterness an income of fifty thousand francs, nor Monsieur de Vaudreuil his place as grand falconer. The Duc de Coigny, first equerry, made a violent scene before the king; and the Baron de Besenval protested that it was frightful to live in a country where one was not sure of possessing on the morrow what one had to-day. "One only sees such things in Turkey," he said angrily.

The uproar was increased by seeing Brienne, in the midst of these retrenchments, heap upon his own head and those of his relatives honours and riches. Under the pretext that the disturbed situation of the country demanded a single direction of the government, he had had himself made principal minister; and the Maréchals de Ségur and de Castries having refused to accept subordinate positions under him, he gave the portfolio of war to his brother, the Comte de Brienne, — a person of but mediocre talent. On the death of the archbishop of Sens, he exchanged his seat of Toulouse for that of Sens, whose revenues were much more considerable; and it was said that a single cutting of wood on one of his estates brought him nine hundred thousand francs, — exorbitant advantages, which exasperated France.

At the same time, from an exaggerated love of peace, or rather in consequence of the disorder in the finances, the ministry, despite the appeals of the Maréchal de Ségur, allowed the

patriots of Holland, who were friends and allies of France, to be crushed by the stadtholder, who had always been hostile to us, and who favoured England and Prussia, — a grave mistake, which shook our influence in Europe, and which in France added the just complaints of statesmen to those of the soldiers, and to the passionate recriminations of the men belonging to the court and to the wardrobe. The brilliancy of the embassy sent by Tippoo Saïb, and the hope of a useful alliance with India, did not suffice to wipe out the disgrace of such a desertion.

The dissatisfaction with Brienne was universal, and part of this discontent recoiled upon the queen. It was she who had made the archbishop minister; it was she who maintained him in his position. She had, thanks to him, so it was said, entered the council; she was held responsible for the resolutions therein taken. The truth is, that in face of the general fermentation, of the menacing attitude of Parliament, and of the wind of revolution which was then whistling through all the provinces, the queen thought it necessary to bring to the defence of authority great consistency of idea and firmness of action. Her natural pride inclined her toward energetic measures; but she had not resolved upon them without a certain hesitation. While believing them useful, she regretted the changes made in the organization of Parliament, and she had an extreme repugnance to all severity. Her reason thought it necessary, but her kindness took alarm. "It is sad," she wrote, "to be obliged to resort to rigorous measures, of which one cannot previously calculate the extent."

Moreover, inexperienced in government affairs, forced without preparation, by the misfortunes of her life and the necessity of self-defence, to concern herself with them, from participation in which the ministers had previously systematically excluded her; possessing great force of character, but ignorant of how to make use of it, — it was not she who gave the impulse, but followed it, at most giving her assent. But infernal malevolence was implacable in regarding her as the author of all evils. They accused her of prodigality in connection with Calonne; they accused her of despotism in connection with Brienne; odious caricatures and abominable placards associated her name with that of Frédégonde, with Isabeau of Bavaria, with Catherine de Médicis. A correspondent of the archbishop of Lyons denounced her as the "invisible power hidden behind the curtain;" and Parliament

itself, in its remonstrances, dared to say to the king, "Such measures, Sire, do not spring from your heart; such examples are not according to the principles of your Majesty: they come from another source." It would have been difficult to designate the queen more clearly. When, on March 10, 1792, Vergniaud pronounced that violent diatribe against Marie Antoinette which denounced her to the fury of the populace, he only followed the example set four years before by the magistrates who sat beneath the *fleur-de-lis*.

Thus politics, from which she had instinctively sought to keep aloof for so long a time, despite the exhortations of Maria Theresa, Mercy, and Joseph II., brought her misfortune as soon as she meddled with them. How much happier she would have been had she remained in her apartment with her needle-work, as one of the musicians of the chapel choir ruefully remarked to her one day! But in the path which necessity had constrained her to enter, despite herself, there was no turning back.

The words which the Abbé Sabattier let fall, and which had been caught up by D'Éprémémil, were echoed by the entire country. The States-General! It would seem that this magic word alone could give back to weakened and divided France peace, riches, and prestige. The Court of the Coadjutors declared in their turn that they had a better right than any other to demand the States-General, since it had been created by them. The Assembly of the Clergy demanded the convocation, with brief delay, of the States-General, and employing for the first time a new language, said to the king, "The glory of your Majesty lies not in being king of France, but in being king of the French."

The movement was so lively and so universal that Brienne thought himself forced to yield to it. A decree of the council of July 5 announced the convocation of the States-General, but without indicating any date. A decree of August 8 fixed it for May 1, 1789. This concession did not appease the public, unanimously aroused against the principal minister. They accepted the convocation of the States-General, but they did not wish to receive it from the hands of Brienne. A decree of August 16, declaring that until the end of the year all payments of the State should be made half in silver and half in notes of the treasury, put the finishing touch to the exasperation of the public; they saw therein disguised bankruptcy. The archbishop, not knowing what to do, but clinging desperately to his power, had the office

of comptroller-general proposed to Necker. It was Mercy, who, on the request of the king and queen, became the intermediary in this negotiation. Necker replied, as the queen had foreseen, that "he would be without power and without means if he were associated with a person who unfortunately was distrusted by the public, but who, nevertheless, was believed to possess great power." He refused to unite his fortune to that of the archbishop.

What to do? The king had ever an extreme repugnance to recall Necker to power; the queen could not make up her mind to sacrifice Brienne, on whose score her eyes were not yet entirely open. It was necessary, however, under penalty of making every reform impossible and every revolt irresistible. The cry of the public grew louder and more pressing. The queen sent for the minister, and although it cost her something, declared that it was necessary to yield before the storm. Always avaricious, Brienne demanded and obtained a cardinal's hat for himself, and for his niece a place as lady of the palace.

On the following day Marie Antoinette wrote to Necker to beg him to come to her: she painted warmly the dangers of the situation, the embarrassment of the king, her own grief; she made an appeal to his loyalty; and Necker, yielding without great difficulty to the eloquence of the queen, after he had been assured that he was to be sole minister, accepted a position which he was at bottom not sorry to fill.

Some days after this, the keeper of the seals, Lamoignon, whom the public associated with Brienne in the same malediction, retired in his turn.

The joy was great and universal. Necker, on leaving the queen's apartments, was received with transports and acclamations; the galleries of the château, the courts, the streets of Versailles, resounded with the cries of, "Long live the king!" "Long live Monsieur Necker!" The popularity of the sovereign was revived by contact with the popularity of the minister. With Brienne and Lamoignon dismissed, and Necker recalled, it seemed that everything was saved; it was more than joy, it was a delirium. And as the French rarely know how to manifest their sentiments calmly and with measure, the scenes in Paris became tumultuous. The archbishop and the keeper of the seals were burned in effigy at the foot of the statue of Henri IV. People who were passing were arrested; women were insulted; houses were pillaged; blood was shed. Strange and

threatening figures mingled with the crowd. It was no longer the explosion of the country's happiness, it was the noisy manifestation of a populace who knew its power and showed it.

The queen laboured under no delusion; alone perhaps of those about her, she did not share the general confidence; she was agitated by gloomy presentiments. "I tremble," she wrote sorrowfully, "that it should be I who have recalled him, — Necker. My lot is to bear misfortune; and if some infernal machination should cause him to fail, or defeat the king's authority, they will detest me still more."

The queen was right. A clever financier, but a mediocre politician, Necker was not equal to the task he had undertaken. Would he have succeeded better in dissipating the peril if he had been in power fifteen months earlier? He said so, and his daughter wrote it; but it is possible to doubt it. Necker was, perhaps, a good comptroller-general; he was incapable of being prime minister. He was a financier, and not a statesman. Always concerned for his popularity, he sought measures that would please, rather than those that might save. Without large views, without any fixed plan or precise idea of the redoubtable question whose solution rested with him, he foresaw nothing and prevented nothing. The more the king determined to yield up his prerogative, the more important it became that his authority should seem to be strong and incontestable. Necker never took the initiative, nor possessed that vigour of conception and ot action which allows of no deviation; in place of directing a movement, he was content to follow it. That physician, who, according to Joseph II., was to save France, had no remedy to propose.

Brienne, in the edict which promised the convocation of the States-General, had engaged not only the municipalities and the tribunals, but also all philosophers and learned persons, to make researches, and to give their advice on the organization of that great Assembly. Floods of *brochures* appeared, setting forth the ideas of any one who could hold a pen, developing the most abstract theories, and often the strangest systems, with an absolute disdain of history and a complete ignorance of the necessities of a government, as if France were a new territory, where there were no traditions and no customs to be taken into consideration. It was no longer the liberty, but the license of the Press. The Comte d'Entraigues, who was to be one of the most ardent

agents of the Revolution, in his memoir on the States-General attacked the monarchy, glorified the republic, represented the French as a troop of slaves, and wrote this phrase, which was an appeal to insurrection: "There is no sort of disorder which is not preferable to the fatal tranquillity procured by absolute power." Sieyès, in a *brochure* which is still celebrated, proclaimed that the Third Estate was nothing in France, whereas it should be everything, — a bold sophism, disproved by history, for the Third Estate has always played, and plays still, a considerable rôle; but like all sophisms, condensed into a simple and specious formula, it was accepted as a revelation and received as a truth.

Every question was broached; all sorts of ideas started; every Utopia found an apostle.

"The fermentation is general," an attentive observer wrote. "One hears nothing talked of but constitutions; the women, in particular, take part in the movement, and you know, as I do, their influence in this country. It is a veritable delirium; every one is an administrator, and talks of progress. In the antechambers the lackeys are occupied in reading the *brochures* which appear; every day ten or twelve new ones are published, and I do not understand how there are printers enough. At this moment it is the fashionable question; and you know as well as I the sway of fashion here."

In the midst of this wave which threatened to submerge everything, the good sense of the public was uncertain, and needed a guide; it did not find one. Necker was not less uncertain and adrift than the public. Twenty problems presented themselves which demanded a prompt and decisive solution. The States-General were to be assembled, that was a fixed fact. But where should they assemble? What should be their composition? What questions should be submitted to them? What rights should they have? What should be the duration of the session? Could one rely in such serious questions on writers without a mission, and on legislators without experience? Was not the first duty of the minister to examine the situation carefully and calmly himself; to surround himself with enlightened counsellors; to listen to the wishes of the public without allowing himself to be carried away by its wild impatience; to have a conviction himself on each point in dispute, and having once formed that conviction, to make an energetic and irrevocable decision, — in a word, to have

a determined goal, and to march toward it with a firm step? Necker was not equal to it. During the whole of the latter part of the year 1788, he allowed the discussion to be continued, minds to become agitated, and opinion to become inflamed. Then, not knowing what to do in the midst of so much contradictory advice, he had the strange idea after the recent sad experience of recalling the Notables to submit to them all these questions. This was to avow that he had no plans himself, and what was worse, no will. As before, the Notables separated after having only augmented the confusion.

It was necessary, however, to adopt some course; and the first point to decide was the city wherein the Assembly of the States-General should take place. Necker proposed Paris, or Versailles, which offered an equal number of disadvantages with Paris; the queen desired a city forty or fifty leagues from the capital, — Orléans, or Tours, or even Rheims, Lyons, or Bordeaux. She realized how necessary it was that for such an assembly to preserve its liberty, it should be separated from a centre of agitation and revolution like Paris, which was always ready for a riot, always disposed to impose its will by means of a numerous mob, and by reason of this numerous mob, easy to influence. But Necker represented the expenditure which the displacement of the court would necessitate; his opinion prevailed. The king, in order to be nearer the States-General, decided that they should meet at Versailles.

But a more serious question, and one which had more passionately aroused public opinion, presented itself. This was the representation of the Third Estate. Should this representation be double that of the other two orders? When Parliament had registered the edict of the convocation of the States-General, it had added the clause that they should be held with all the forms used in 1614; but many changes had occurred since 1614. The importance of the first two orders had diminished; while that of the third, on the other hand, had greatly increased. In the provincial assemblies, the number of deputies from the Third Estate equalled the number of deputies from the clergy and the *noblesse* combined. The greater number of the publicists demanded that the same rule should apply to the States-General as to the provincial assemblies; and the declaration of Parliament immediately lessened the popularity of that great body, which had hitherto been valued for its resistance, often factious, to the royal authority. It was

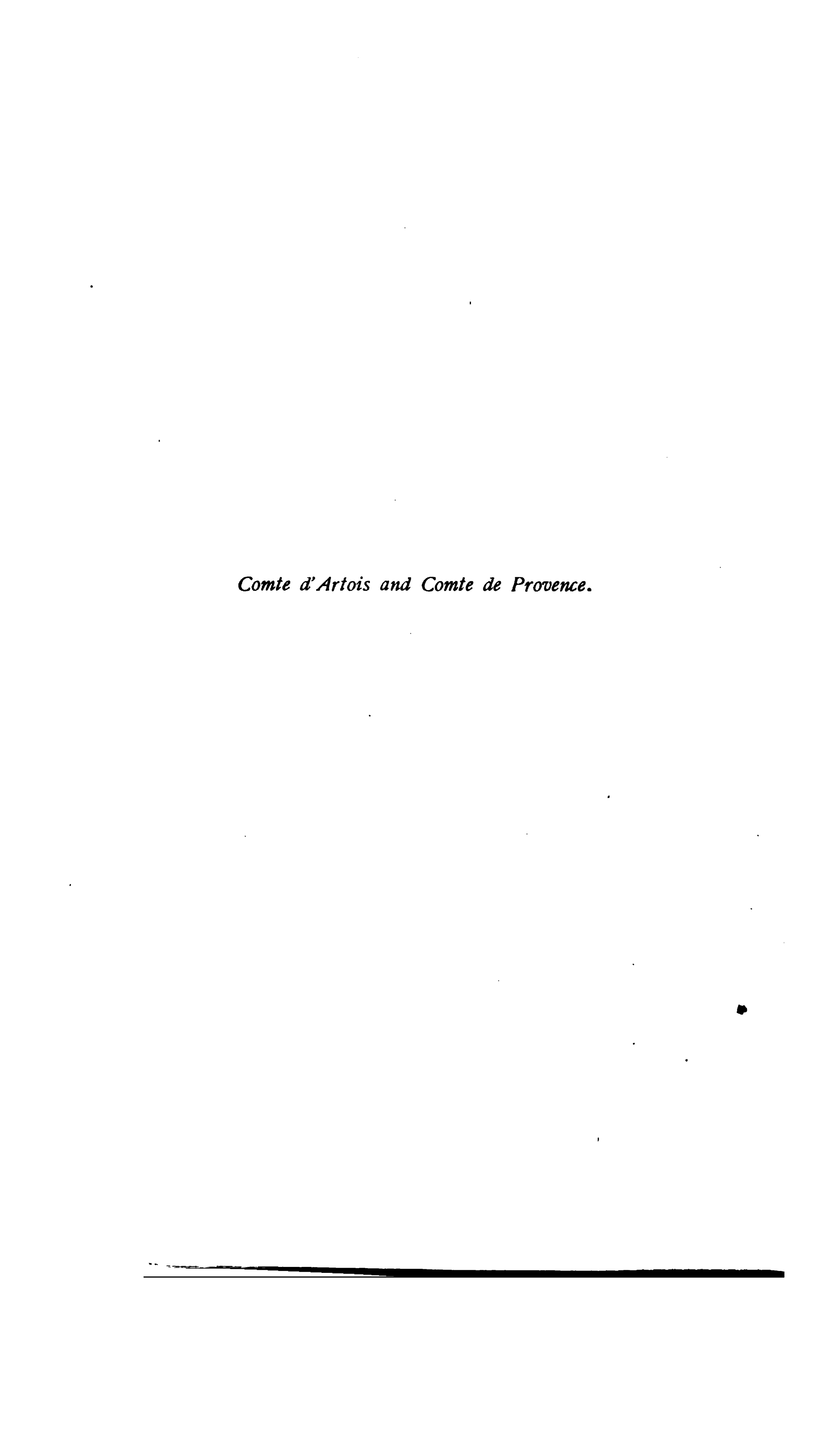
on Dec. 27, 1788, that the government pronounced its opinion. Marie Antoinette was present at the council; the double representation of the Third Estate was agreed upon. The king from a feeling of justice, the queen from the same sentiment and also from distrust of the first two orders, whose opposition had more than once created such great embarrassment in the government during the last two years, and Necker from his love of popularity, had agreed upon this decision; but Necker assumed all the credit of it. By a strange neglect of decorum, an act of this importance was published without preamble; it only said that the king, after having studied the report of his minister of finance, had adopted the principle. Thus Necker had, in the eyes of the public, all the merit and all the credit of this popular measure; the monarch was thrown into the shade, in order to heighten the brilliancy of the all-powerful minister, — a singular manner of elevating the majesty and authority of the throne in the eyes of the populace. But Necker only listened to his own extreme vanity, which veiled his real insufficiency before his own eyes and the eyes of the masses. According to the saying of one of the historians who has shown the greatest impartiality in judging the conduct of the Genevan financier at this time, "He played the rôle of king because he was impotent to fulfil the part of minister."

Another decision of cardinal importance — that of the vote by order or by head — was left to the decision of the States, who thus were charged, by a fatal mistake or blind lack of foresight, with the making of their own rules and the direction of their own work.

The *noblesse* were indignant with the queen for the part she had taken in this affair. It was her destiny to be held responsible for everything. The princes of the blood sent to the king by the Comte d'Artois a protest against this increase of the Third Estate; and the prince made the most lively representations to his sister-in-law concerning her preference for the Third Estate, and on the necessity of upholding the *noblesse*. The queen listened to him without interruption, but her sentiments were not changed. This was the signal between Marie Antoinette and her brother-in-law for an estrangement which had been preparing for some time, and which the years that followed but increased. The Polignacs took sides with the Comte d'Artois, and the bonds of friendship, already greatly relaxed, threatened to break, as well as family ties.







Comte d'Artois and Comte de Provence.

Alas! it was not long before the unfortunate woman found only enemies in the royal family, and the most implacable were those on the very steps of the throne. Of a cold and calculating disposition, the Comte de Provence had always been looked upon with suspicion by Marie Antoinette. On several occasions he had sought to draw near her from policy. He had given her a magnificent entertainment in his house of Brunoy, with the most ingenious and gallant diversions; he had accompanied her to the balls at the opera; he had even gone so far as to write verses in her honour; and one day, having broken a fan of which the queen was very fond, he had hastened to send her another with this quatrain: —

" In the midst of a heat one can scarcely support
For your comfort I seek to provide.
My care is the Zephyrs to call to your side;
The Loves of themselves come unsought."

But this intimacy was only apparent, and on the part of Monsieur entirely the result of calculation. Ambitious and eager to play a rôle, clever and distinguished, feeling himself, moreover, the superior of Louis XVI., he regarded it as a mistake, and almost as an insult on the part of Nature, that he should not have been the first-born. "His grief," the queen wrote, "all his life, has been not to be master." During the journeys that he had made to the centre of France in 1787, he had exhibited an almost royal magnificence and equipage, posing almost as a pretender, as if seeking to eclipse the king and to attract to himself, to the detriment of the sovereign, the regards and affections of the people. "If Monsieur de Maurepas were not such a softling," Joseph II. said energetically, "one could not conceive how he could allow such things." The power of the queen had overthrown her brother-in-law. He accused her of having hindered him from entering the council, and could not pardon her for it. He could pardon her still less for her tardy maternity, which had closed to him the prospect of the throne at the very moment when he was beginning to believe it assured to him. Publicly, and before her, he made the best of it; but behind her back, and in secret, he tore her to pieces. Criticisms, persiflage, epigrams, calumnies, libels, petty verses and *brochures*, — he spared nothing; and his palace, the Luxembourg, exempt by its privileges from all police researches, became the storehouse of the libels and pamphlets which flooded Versailles

and Paris. In the conflicts of the minister and Parliament, the prince had openly declared for Parliament, seeking to found his reputation for liberalism in opposition to the court and at the expense of the authority of the king, and to crush by his popularity the unpopularity of his sister-in-law and the nonentity of his brother. The statesman in him was still only in embryo; the hard experience of exile was necessary to mature it.

Designing like her husband, Italian in both mind and body, of mediocre intelligence, of a deceitful and reserved character, Madame had no more sympathy for the queen than Monsieur. The two sisters-in-law had at first lived together frankly but coldly, without quarrels, without confidence; but soon distrust had intervened. There was no open rupture, but only secret hostility. Without influence at court, possessing none over her husband, who deserted her for Madame de Baldi, looked upon with disfavour by the king, little loved by those about her, often exhibiting a want of tact, living apart and concerning herself almost exclusively with her farm and her kitchen, Madame was not a redoubtable enemy for the queen; but she made a voice the more in the concert of recriminations and malevolent rancour raised against her.

The Comte d'Artois, who was gay, lively, well made, and fond of pleasure, was for a long time one of Marie Antoinette's intimates. He was the organizer of her diversions, the habitual host at Trianon, the favourite of the Polignac set. In this rôle he was one of those on whom history has laid the greatest responsibility for the dissipation and frivolity which for a time carried away the queen. The races, the play, the balls, all those entertainments which we have mentioned above, originated with the Comte d'Artois. This community of amusements had not a little contributed toward drawing upon the young sovereign (who, however, had but a mediocre liking for her brother-in-law) a share of the unpopularity of that prince, who was undoubtedly amiable, but who was petulant, haughty, prodigal, and contemptuous of the opinion of the public. Age, reflection, experience, and the purer joys and more austere cares of maternity had diminished an intimacy which only rested in reality upon a need of distraction and the fear of being bored. The opposition which the Comte d'Artois had shown to Necker's reforms, the support which he had given to Calonne, the part which he had taken in the fall of Brienne, the memoir which he had handed to the

king concerning the increase of the Third Estate, succeeded in estranging him completely from his sister-in-law. The thirst of pleasure had for a moment united them; the cares of more serious occupations separated them; politics divided them, and was to divide them still further.

Of the Comtesse d'Artois, who was good and sweet, but an absolute nonentity, we have nothing to say. No one paid any attention to her at court, and her husband least of all. In the beginning, her repeated pregnancy, in face of the sterility of the queen and Madame, had given her a certain importance. The birth of the dauphin had thrown her into obscurity again. "It would be necessary for that poor little princess to die in order to make any one think of her," Madame de Bombelles wrote at a time when the countess was very ill of a malignant fever. Such was the opinion of the court, and that of the public; and if the princess had then died, such would probably have been her funeral oration.

The only one of her sisters-in-law for whom Marie Antoinette felt any real sympathy was Madame Elisabeth. She had soon learned to value that young girl, whose gay spirit, decided character, naïve grace, and exquisite sensibility touched her. "I fear," she wrote to her mother, "to grow too fond of her." The years had only made this attraction stronger; and the almost instinctive affection which a lovable child inspires had given place to the more serious affection which springs from an esteem for solid and profound qualities. The young princess's taste for a tranquil life and for friendship, her repugnance to pomp and pretension, had perhaps also contributed to increase the friendship of the queen, who shared these inclinations and repugnances. When Marie Antoinette went to Trianon, she always took her young sister-in-law with her, and there surrounded her with the most delicate attentions, prepared the most charming surprises for her, associated her in her pleasures, made her play a rôle in the "Gageure Imprévue," took her to St. Cyr, to Rambouillet, to La Muette, to Bellevue, to St. Cloud, to the hunt, to the play, gave her even a larger share in her distress and disquietude, and implored her aid in caring for her sick children. During a time, notably in 1781, one would have said that the two sisters-in-law were inseparable. The queen had wished that Madame Elisabeth should also have her own house. She had induced the king to buy the house of the Prince de Guéménée at Montreuil; and one day,

without saying anything, she conducted her young sister-in-law thither. "You are in your own home," she said to her; "this is to be your Trianon. The king, who takes pleasure in presenting it to you, has allowed me the pleasure of apprising you of it."

What is strange, however, is that this affection was not reciprocal; where the queen yielded herself entirely, Madame Elisabeth preserved a certain reserve, which resembled mistrust, and in a letter which she wrote at that time, allowed herself to say, "Our opinions differ; she is an Austrian, and I am a Bourbon." The school of misfortune was needed to open her eyes, and show the queen to her in her true light. She understood then the queen's real worth, and reproached herself for having misjudged her for a time; the hesitating friend of Trianon became the devoted companion of the Temple.

An Austrian! This word alone reveals the instigator of the prejudices which for a time estranged the affection of Madame Elisabeth from the queen. Between the two sisters-in-law, so well formed to understand each other, the fatal influence of Madame Adélaïde had risen like a malevolent fairy. During the last hours of the monarchy, as at the beginning of the reign, the old princess preserved against the queen, already so unfortunate, the obstinate dislike with which she had hounded her as dauphiness and as the adored sovereign. In her retirement at Bellevue, whence she rarely departed, embittered by age and by her isolation, she gathered with malevolent joy all the insinuations against Marie Antoinette, — the pamphlets, the satires, the complots, the equivocal anecdotes, which those who wished to pay their court to her hastened to bring her. Champcenetz and the Marquis de Louvois were the usual purveyors of this honest coterie; and thence pamphlets, songs, anecdotes, reviewed, corrected, and annotated, were sent forth to amuse the court, to scandalize the city, to embitter public opinion, and if possible, to prejudice the king against his wife. Madame Adélaïde had even dared one day, on July 12, 1788, to go to her nephew and lay before him with acrimonious passion her grievances against the queen; the attack had failed, despite the support which, from her retreat at St. Denys, Madame Louise had lent it; and the king had dryly begged his aunt not to quit Bellevue again. But we can imagine that this check had not appeased the rancour of the old maid; during the end of the reign, Bellevue, which Madame owed to a delicate attention on the part of her

niece, became the scene of all the intrigues against Marie Antoinette.

It was to Bellevue that the Prince de Condé went to receive new inspiration before accompanying Madame Adélaïde when she went to denounce the queen to her husband. It was to Bellevue again that he went to revive his hatred against the young sovereign. A valiant warrior, prodigal by taste and by the tradition of his race, but of a narrow mind and violent character, a sufficiently bad head of the family, moreover, the Prince de Condé was immoderate in everything he did, in his passions as in his rancour. Blindly attached to the ancient French policy, he could not pardon Marie Antoinette her Austrian origin. He pardoned her still less for opposing the person whom he had named as chief master of the artillery, and for having refused to allow Madame de Monaco, his friend, to appear before her, declaring that she would not receive women who were separated from their husbands. The trial of the Cardinal de Rohan had added another pretext to his complaints; and from that time the prince had ranged himself among the most inveterate enemies of the queen.

His son, the Duc de Bourbon, had no personal grievance against Marie Antoinette. In the affair which made so much noise — his duel with the Comte d'Artois — the queen had shown no preference; but the lover of fifteen years, who was so soon disloyal, forgot his incessant quarrels with his father, in order to share his prejudices.

Despised at court, despised by the public, the brother-in-law of the Duc de Bourbon, the Duc d'Orléans, had only been able to regain a little favour by declaring himself the queen's enemy. What had led him to do this? Was it disappointed ambition, wounded vanity, dreams of illegitimate grandeur? A little of all these, perhaps. He has been represented as a persevering and clever conspirator, pushing his way to the throne by shady machinations; but this is an error. Of a noble bearing and distinguished air, preserving in the midst of his gross irregularities an attractive manner and elegant dress, but light-minded, of a weak character, incapable of sustained attention to anything serious, idle and indolent to excess, the Duc d'Orléans had no quality that could make him the chief of a party. His dissolute life, which was but too evident in his face, his infidelity to his wife, — the pious daughter of the Duc de Penthièvre, — his orgies at Monceaux, his cynical

tone, destroyed all his influence; but his title as first prince of the blood and his immense fortune made him a dangerous instrument in the hands of clever intriguers. While he was still only Duc de Chartres, he had begun by paying court to the queen; he had given her balls at the Palais Royal, organized with the Comte d'Artois, then his companion in pleasure, horse-races in her honour, frequented sedulously the salon of his sister-in-law, the Princesse de Lamballe, the queen's favourite. The latter at that epoch showed her young cousin marked favour: she obtained for him the government of Poitou; two years later she had him made colonel-general of hussars, and had even exhibited in the pursuit of this nomination such warmth as to displease the public, which was at that time strongly indisposed toward the prince.

This appointment was made shortly after the battle of Ouessant. The conduct of the Duc de Chartres in that affair had given rise to lively recriminations, and even to dishonourable suspicions; to-day, when we can better judge of this affair, because of our greater knowledge and freedom from passion, it is certain that if the bravery of the prince cannot be called in question, his capacity as a sailor cannot be established. The queen had sought in this appointment an honourable means of retiring him from the marine; but this was not what the duke desired, as he had aspired to the position of chief admiral. Dissatisfied with the new title given to him, wounded in his privileges as prince of the blood during the journey of the Archduke Maximilian, he withdrew from the court, and from that time joined the cabal hostile to the queen. Did the latter avenge herself for his ill-justified susceptibility by repeating some of the cutting pleasantries to which the behaviour of the commander of the Blue Squadron had given rise? The chroniclers of the time aver it, and it does not seem improbable.

Despite her extreme good-nature, Marie Antoinette could not always resist the temptation of listening to or saying something witty. There arose consequently a war of underhand intrigues and perfidious machinations on the part of the prince, of piquant raillery on the part of the queen, — a war seemingly inoffensive in the beginning (for what danger was there to fear from a man whose morals all Paris decried, and whose military exploits and industrial enterprises the court made sport of?), — until the day when the prince, piqued by a remark that his instincts were mercantile rather than princely, irritated at the failure of the mar-

riage he had planned between his son and Madame Royale, and instigated, furthermore, by the worthy companions of his pleasure (the Laclos, the Lauzuns, the Sillerys), burst forth suddenly in full Parliament on Nov. 19, 1787, while the king was holding a solemn session, to demand the registration of a loan of four hundred and twenty millions, with, "This registration is illegal." This violent outbreak brought upon him the king's displeasure, who was the more justly incensed as he had just accorded him a much-desired permission, but gained for him as compensation the favour of the public — which was at first surprised at this vigorous measure — and the good-will of Madame Adélaïde. This prudish and pious princess openly took sides with the libertine prince, who put at the service of the rancour of the old maid the name of D'Orléans and the fortune of the Penthièvres.

Exiled to Villers-Cotteret, the duke did not sustain with much constancy his rôle as chief of the party; he had neither sufficient audacity nor courage for it. At the end of a few months, weary of his exile, regretting the pleasures of Monceaux, and eager to see Madame Buffon again, he solicited the queen for permission to return to Paris, or at least to reside nearer to it. At that moment, when the circumstances were so solemn, Marie Antoinette, who was ever disposed to clemency, listened to Madame de Lamballe, and despite her repugnance, yielded to the wishes of her friend. The duke was allowed to repair to his château of Raincy, and thus added to his former grievances against Marie Antoinette a grievance the more, — that of gratitude. The opposition to the court and the enemies of the queen had for the future a nominal chief, and this chief was the first prince of the blood.

A royal family divided against itself; a king who was anxious for the good of his people, but who was weak, undecided, discouraged; a queen who was valiant, but lacking in experience, and the object of popular hatred; a self-sufficient minister, without plan or direction; a feverish public opinion which was as dangerous by reason of its ill-considered hopes as its unjust suspicions; an exhausted treasury; a malevolent capital; the country scarce recovered from its recent disturbances; an army in which the seeds of disorganization were already sown; everywhere means of attack, nowhere any means of defence; and as if Nature herself conspired with men to destroy the old monarchical edifice, a terrible winter following a bad summer; the rivers frozen, the roads blocked with snow, rendering it difficult to

provision Paris; the water-mills unable to run, and thus stopping the grinding of grain; the scarcity adding real suffering to the vague disquietude; famine furnishing astonishing facility for every intrigue, and specious pretexts for indignation, — it was under such circumstances and with such guides that France approached the most formidable crisis that she had ever met in her history.

END OF VOL. I.





